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Prize for Elementary Philosophy
in the 3rd School
was awarded to

Miss Edmund

July 1868

THE
FARLEYES OF FARLEYE;

OR,

FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

A TALE IN THREE BOOKS.

BY

REV. THOMAS J. POTTER,

ALL HALLOWS' COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

AUTHOR OF "THE TWO VICTORIES," "LEGENDS, LYRICS, AND HYMNS,"

"THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER," "LIGHT AND SHADE,"

"PERCY GRANGE; OR THE OCEAN OF LIFE;"

ETC., ETC.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there ;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair."

Second Edition.

DUBLIN :
JAMES DUFFY, 15, WELLINGTON-QUAY,
AND
22, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.
1867.

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DUBLIN :

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND ROBERT CORNTHWAITE, D.D.,

Bishop of Beberley,

ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR LORD,

Many motives into which it is here unnecessary to enter, but which your kind sympathy will readily divine, have influenced me in seeking to usher this work into existence under the sanction of your name.

For ten years or more, the time which I have been able to snatch from even graver and more important duties, has been devoted, if not with much success, at least with great good will, to the cause of our Catholic light literature. In these days of general reading—in these days when our people *will* read for good or for evil, as it was so forcibly put by the late illustrious Primate of the English Church—he who spoke with unquestioned authority on such a matter as this—I think we have all felt that a thoroughly Catholic light literature, a literature which might secure rational amusement without the loss, or even the endangering

of faith or morals, was one of our greatest wants. I wish we could add that there is any reason to believe that this want will soon be supplied.

Partly, perhaps, from the poverty of the majority of our people—partly from the superior attractions, in a natural point of view, of those publications with which our Catholic books and periodicals can never successfully compete without ceasing to be Catholic—and partly from the fact that those who might reasonably be reckoned upon as purchasers of Catholic books do not fulfil these expectations, the prospects of our English Catholic light literature do not seem to be very encouraging. No matter how many there may be who are fully competent to enter a field of labour, which, alas, for the interests of faith and morality is only too barren, there are few who are able, fewer still who are willing, to devote themselves to it, on those conditions of unrewarded toil, if not of positive pecuniary loss, which seem unfortunately to be inseparable from its cultivation. If the conditions of English Catholic light literature are to become such as to entice aspirants to devote their talents to its development and progress, I venture to think it must meet with a support much broader in its scope, more generous in its view, and more hearty in its sustainment, than is at present extended to it.

Until then, I am afraid, we must be content to see our literature occupying a position far lower, and less potent for good, than the interests of either religion, of morality, or of truth require. And we must, I fear, be equally prepared to see many of those who are very dear to us, many who ought perhaps to be our glory and our crown, wasting themselves upon that indiscriminate light reading whose pernicious effects, like a deadly poison, make their way into the soul until purity and innocence of heart have been insensibly destroyed, until virtue and faith have been undermined, if not completely overthrown.

I suppose it is scarcely necessary to remark that the "Farleyes of Farleye" is purely a work of the imagination, and that it neither professes to sketch real personages, nor to deal with actual occurrences. Having said this, let me add, however, that, during the many pleasant months we have spent together, some of those who figure in its pages have become very dear to me; whilst there is not one of them who, in my eyes at least, has not acquired a very real and a very substantial existence, and I left the last of the Farleyes "under the shadows of the dear old home" with more of sorrow and of loneliness in my heart than I at all care to confess.

Whilst neither the good will to labour in my

own simple way, nor my intimate and ever-growing conviction of the immense importance of this object, has suffered the slightest diminution, I think it not improbable, on several accounts, that "The Farleyes of Farleye" will be the last of my humble contributions to our scanty stock of English Catholic light literature, properly so called.

In such circumstances, simple duty would prompt me to lay this work at the feet of him who sits in the chair and wields the pastoral staff of our dear St. John of Beverley. When the affectionate instincts of the heart keep pace with, or, rather, run before, the promptings of duty, the discharge of that duty becomes not only easy but very sweet. I think I need not tell you, my Lord, that it is in the discharge of duty, prompted by affection born of many kindly counsels and of many friendly offices, this little work is laid, in love and duty, at your feet. It is offered to you, not as being worthy of your acceptance, but in the hope that it may serve to testify, in some small measure, to the affectionate veneration and the respectful esteem in which your Lordship is held, by

Your faithful friend

And servant in Christ,

THE AUTHOR.

May 1st, 1867.

BOOK FIRST.

—
SPRING.


“ Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
 In every fragment multiplies ; and makes
A thousand images of one that was,
 The same, and still the more, the more it breaks;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
 Living in shattered guise ; and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
 Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.”

THE
FARLEYES OF FARLEYE,

ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

FARLEYE HALL.

OR some time past, in fact ever since I fully determined to sit down and pen this veritable history, I have been racking my brains how to make an appropriate, if not elegant commencement. Although almost too far advanced on the path of life, and too old-fashioned both in my ideas and in my way of expressing them, to care very much about the requirements or the tastes of this sensational age, still, I am not ignorant of their existence, and, hence, when once I had determined to write this history, naturally enough I was anxious to make an impressive beginning, one which might at the same time please my readers and rivet their attention to my tale. And, yet, after all my anxiety and all my thought

on the matter, I feel that I could not well have made a worse beginning than I have done, or one more calculated to prejudice my reader against me. But, what could I do? If the period at which this history is laid had been either in the early spring, the glowing summer, or even amid the gathering shadows of an autumn day, I might perchance have fallen back upon the solitary horseman of happy memory who has, in times gone by, stood so valiantly to his post on many a memorable occasion, and who has always been kind enough and considerate enough to be seen ascending the crest of the neighbouring hill, or winding around its base, just at the critical moment when he was wanted. Or, supposing that I possessed the ability (which I do not), or the desire (from which I pray to be protected) to conform myself to the requirements and usages of our modern romancers, I might have commenced by introducing to the notice of my readers some wonderful personages who never did, and who never could have existed in such a prosy matter-of-fact world as this of ours, whose history should have been at once involved in a mystery of the most unparalleled and inextricable nature, only to be unraveled in the very last page of my book. This would have been a very good beginning, and would have been quite according to the fashion. Supposing me to have possessed the skill to weave one of these absorbing plots, there is no doubt that you would not

have laid down my work until you had skimmed its very last line, and although I am equally sure that when you had once unraveled the mystery you would never have dreamt of opening the book again, still, would not this have been a something gained; a something for which I might have sung glad Pæans of rejoicing as I bound my laurels on my brow, and, with complacent thankfulness, watched my bantling make its way through the circulating libraries, in three very small volumes of very large type, at 3ls. 6d.? But, it would be simply ridiculous to bring the historic horseman round the hill in the midst of a heavy fall of snow on a bitter winter's night, since it is not to be presumed that, under the circumstances, there would be any persons present to hail his advent, any more than it is to be presumed that they would be able to see him if they were present. Neither am I able or willing, for the reasons which I have already assigned, to open my work by the introduction of any mysterious or disreputable personages to the notice of my readers, since none such are to figure in its pages. Although these ideas may be very old-fashioned and long out of date, I, at least, shall not minister to any taste which aspires to nothing higher than the gratification of an empty, and, perhaps, morbid curiosity—I, at least, shall bring before my readers none at whose presence they need blush, although perchance I may ask them both to pity and condemn.

Hence, whilst I dispense with the services of the aforesaid horseman, of happy and historic memory, and allow him once more to retire to the obscurity of that private life in which he has been so long enshrouded, and from which I have thus momentarily dragged him forth and presented him to the view of an admiring, and, I trust, appreciating public; whilst I take all due credit to myself for not introducing to you in the pages of this story any one whom you need be at all ashamed to meet, or whose presence need bring the blush to your cheek, I am, dear reader, driven back all the more forcibly upon the melancholy conclusion which has taken possession of me, viz.: that I have made a very bad beginning of my history. And, yet, as I said before, what could I do? You know I could not commence by merely remarking that one dreary November night, in the year 184—, it was snowing bitterly; and, yet, this was the simple fact. *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.* Great is truth and it is certain to prevail. Perhaps some of my readers are old enough to remember the great snow of 184—. I am aware that the fact of my neglecting to add the fourth figure to my date may throw some obscurity upon the exact year to which I refer. I must, however, beg to be excused from any greater degree of preciseness than that which is expressed by the figures 184—; and as there were several notable falls of snow in the decade of years from 1840 to 1850, such of my readers as

are at all uneasy about the matter may select whichever year pleases them the best; and this arrangement will answer the two-fold purpose of satisfying them, whilst, without tying me down to the inconvenience of a fixed and precise date, it will not interfere with the substantial correctness of my story.

At all events, it was snowing heavily. Down, down, down they came, the pure white flakes, in such profusion and of such a size that even if it had not been snowing almost without intermission for the last twenty-four hours, the earth would soon have been covered with its virgin pall; but as I was scarcely able to make my way along our village street this morning when I attended the parish meeting which had been called to devise some means of assisting the poor over the bitter season which had now fairly set in, I do not know what is to become of us if this continue much longer. We had a stormy meeting enough, in more senses than one. I suppose it was because the Rector and the Churchwardens proposed a house-to-house collection in order to buy coals for the poor, that therefore the Dissenters opposed it, and moved an amendment to the effect, that, as everything ought to be done on the Voluntary system, those who were inclined to subscribe might leave their offerings with the Lawyer who is a very important man in our parish, and who, so far as I could ever learn, is neither Churchman nor Dissenter, perhaps finding this to answer better in

the way of business. Fearing very much that if this Voluntary system motion were carried, the poor might be left for a very long time without their coals, and after the two parties had wrangled fiercely for full an hour and a-half in vindication of the principle, as they expressed it, I ventured to suggest, during a moment of comparative calm, that it might perhaps be better to defer the final settlement of the point in debate to a more favorable opportunity, as there was considerable danger of some of the poor being starved to death in the meanwhile. Now, whether it is because I am one of the wealthiest men in our little village, although in truth I am very far from being rich, or whether it is because, being as I am the only Catholic in the place, they have some kind of an undefined dread of me, I cannot say, but, at all events, whatever may be the reason, I always find them treat me with a good deal of respect and even deference. Hence, on this occasion, as soon as my voice was heard in the temporary lull of this storm of noisy contention, the disputants at once suspended hostilities, and whilst the Rector, who is a sleek and comely gentleman, was good enough to say that he was always glad to forget our doctrinal differences in the recollection of my practical benevolence and charity, (which I must say was a very handsome speech,) the Methodist Minister also added, on behalf of himself and party, that, whilst he ever felt conscientiously bound to hold Popery in the abstract in the utmost

abhorrence and reprobation, he was equally ready with the Rector to regard it more favourably in the concrete as represented by my modest subscription (only he used another adjective) to our village charities. Whilst I trust that I was not unduly puffed up with their compliments, although I must say that the Rector turned his very nicely, I was exceedingly glad to have made peace between them, for the subscriptions came in so freely as to enable us to buy not only coals but blankets for many of the shivering poor.

As soon as our meeting was dissolved I was anxious enough to get home again I assure you. The snow was coming down worse than ever. As I passed the Red Lion I found that rampant animal altogether hidden from my sight, and the landlord casting anxious glances at the sign on which the noble beast had been depicted in a very extraordinary, but, I suppose, becoming attitude, by the artist who doubtless painted him from nature. The landlord told me as I passed along that he was very much afraid that if the snow continued his sign would come tumbling down into the middle of the road. The snow beat into my face in such a bitter and a blinding shower that when I reached the forge I was fain to turn in for a little shelter and repose. The blacksmith rubbed me down very much as he would have done a horse; and to this I did not, under the circumstances, make much objection; but I think he might as well have omitted that unpleasant

hissing sound during the operation which, so far as I know, is only applied to quadrupeds. He is a great man is our blacksmith, and when he lays down the law, whether it be to the vulgar mob who crowd round his smithy during the day, especially in severe weather, or to the more select few who gather on an evening under the auspices of the Red Lion, he does so with an assurance to which it is very refreshing to listen, and which no doubt is one of the greatest elements of success. There are some who affirm that assurance and impudence are generally synonymous terms, but I do not agree with them, and, least of all, if applied to our blacksmith; but, at the same time, I do wish that he had not been quite so confident just now in his assertion that the snow would continue for the next six weeks.

A little rest, and then out again into the driving, blinding snow! Past the great school where the Doctor's scholars are busy raising their entrenchments of snow, preparatory to the engagement between themselves and the village bumpkins, who, as I understand, generally come off victorious in the affray, perhaps because on account of their rougher bringing up they are better able to bear hard knocks than the Doctor's daintier-bred young gentlemen. Down by the grey old parish church in a corner of whose quiet graveyard one who was dearer to me than all the world beside—one whose place can never more be filled upon this earth, sleeps her long last sleep, with

the pure white virgin snow heaped high upon her fair young breast. On by the village mill until I come to the little cottage of Gaffer Deighton, who is pretty certain to tell me that "he is all tied up in a knot like, with the rheumatics, and that if this weather lasts it will be the end of him, that it will." Poor old Gaffer! I know the medicine that is most efficacious in his complaint, and the balm that brings most comfort and consolation to his aches and pains; and if his poor old glazing eyes brighten up a little as he hears the chink of coin, who shall blame him or speak harshly of him! Not I!—not I! I only hope that our committee will give him a double share of the blankets and the coals. I only hope that God will temper the biting wind and the bitter cold to his feeble frame and his scanty means of protecting himself against them. God help the poor! I say to myself a hundred times a day, as the wind comes howling fiercely down the chimney, or wailing mournfully round the quaint old gables of my house, making me feel quite ashamed of myself to be so warm and comfortable whilst so many of my Master's blessed poor can scarcely keep the spark of life alight within their frozen veins.

Ah! there it is at last—neither small enough to be merely a cottage, nor large enough to rank as a hall, although indeed it is generally so called by the villagers. Down at the very end of a long lane whose sloping banks are painted, all the spring and all the summer through, with the fairest and

the sweetest flowers that grow in all the country round, stands my humble home—a quaint old house with pointed gables and latticed casements of a date long years gone by. They say that the present Farleye Hall is nearly three hundred years old, and my forefathers have lived there time out of mind. It is but a tumble-down old place now, but as I am nearly the last of my race, it will serve our time, and when our name has passed away, let them throw down the old Hall too, and let the Farleyes and Farleye Hall be numbered with the past and gone. We have only been a race of yeomen, but we have held our own in Farleye Hall for many hundred years, and when there is no longer a Farleye to be sheltered beneath its roof it had better be swept away. I think the Farleyes dead and gone would turn in their graves at the very thought of new people with new fangled ways settling down in Farleye Hall. As I said just now we have only been a race of yeomen, but we are as proud of our independence, and as jealous of our unsullied name, as the Ravenshalles who live on the other side of the village can ever be, although they can trace their pedigree down to the time of the Conqueror. It was a great trial to my father when he found that the liberal education which, in his honest pride, he gave to me, had to a certain extent unfitted, as it had disinclined me, to settle down and till the ancestral acres as my forefathers had done before me. My father, although he farmed his own land, did so from

choice and not from necessity. He was in far too comfortable circumstances to need to do that. When he saw that my tastes were all for books and study he let me have my way, although I fancy he could scarcely help considering me as a somewhat degenerate scion of the old stock. I think the last thing which he made me promise him was never to "let" the old Hall. "I dont ask thee, my lad;" he said almost at the last, when his voice was failing and the colour had all gone out of his fine old hearty English face; "I dont ask thee to till the land, if it isn't pleasing to thy taste, but thou'lt never let the old Hall, my lad, thou'lt surely never let the old Hall;" he almost cried, wringing my hand as he spoke. "No father," I answered, "never fear, as long as I live a stranger shall never make his home in Farleye Hall;" and I think the old man passed away more easily and more happily for the promise. I brightened up the old place a bit when I brought my fair young bride home, and so long as she was with me, she seemed to impart some share of that sunshine which ever shone from her own light-heartedness and her innocent cheerfulness to the dark passages and the sombre apartments of the Hall. Sunshine indeed!—sunshine all the more vivid, all the more cheering, from the sad and desolate darkness which once more fell upon it like a pall that seemed as if it would never move away, when, after one brief year of happiness, too great and deep to last, it pleased my God to take my darling

to himself. I am not going to write about it now. I have got over my first grief, and I have learnt to look my sorrow in the face, only I know that I should have died too if it had not been for the thought of the helpless child who was left to me to love and live for, the helpless child who was, in time, to fill even to overflowing the deepest and the holiest pulses of the heart that has lived to beat for him and his dear sake alone. My Pet! My Pet! Down through the narrow lane I see the ruddy glow of the fire as it leaps within the grate of our cosy little room and casts its cheerful light upon the snow that lies without. I see thy anxious face as it peers through the casement, watching my return. I almost see the depth of love that trembles in thy eye. I see the motion of thy tiny hand, and all my heart goes out to thee in one great yearning act of love. My little crippled child! How dear thou art, above all price, to me! Dearer in thy sickness and thy pains, dearer in thy quaint old-fashioned ways, dearer in the very helplessness of thy affliction, than if thou wert the sprightliest boy that dwelt upon the earth, or woke the echoes far and near with the ringing music of thy joyous laugh. The sound of thy little crutch, with its pit-pit-pat upon the floor, is sweeter music to my ears than any else the world contains. The gentle softness of thy uncomplaining voice, the patient resignation of thy great blue eyes, the loving pressure of thy wasted little hand, are treasures dearer far to me than gold or precious

stones. My little crippled child, my one poor lamb, the solace of my lonely life, God knows how all my heart goes out to thee, God knows how fervently I pray that it may be my lot through all the coming years to watch, protect, and guard thy feeble steps; to tend thee with such jealous and unceasing care that neither winter wind may blow too roughly on thy head, nor summer sun shine down too fiercely on thy fair young face.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAJOR-DOMO OF FARLEYE.

I SUPPOSE one never feels the comfort of one's own fireside so keenly as when the winter's storm is raging in its fury and its violence outside. With the curtains closely drawn across the latticed casement, with the logs blazing brightly in the quaint old-fashioned grate till the flames seemed to leap in all kinds of fantastic shapes half up the chimney, with an antique screen of wonderful size and form between us and the door of the room in which we sat, my Pet and I had settled ourselves down for a long uninterrupted evening. My little child had got himself snugly settled on my knee, his arm about my neck, and his cheek nestling closely to my breast, as he prepared himself to listen to one of those stories which were the chief delight and amusement of his lonely life. Hour after hour, night after night, has he sat upon my knee, listening with the look of wonder growing every moment deeper on his strangely earnest thoughtful little face, as I have told him stories from the Arabian Nights, or other books of fairy lore and mystery. As we have approached the climax I have felt his little cheek creep closer

to my breast, his little arm cling tighter round my neck, and looking down I have seen the tears coursing along his face, in mute sympathy with the sorrows or the trials of our hero or heroine. My Pet dearly loved a fairy tale, well spun out, and full of wonderful adventures. There were two essential conditions upon which he rigorously insisted; the young prince or princess must go through a great deal of trial and suffering, and the wicked fairy must receive condign and exemplary punishment. Sometimes when I have succeeded in shutting the wicked godmother up in the strong box and casting her to the bottom of the lake; or, as the flying horse has made his appearance at the very critical moment when she was about to inflict some irreparable injury upon our beautiful young prince, and borne the malignant old fairy away into the clouds never to be seen again, my Pet has clapped his little hands in glee, and crowed with gladness and delight. How many years have passed away since the winter's night of which I write, but, through them all, my heart goes back again to thee, my little child, in faithful never-dying love? That little hand is round my neck once more; that soft young cheek is nestling still once more against my own; those thoughtful wondering eyes are looking into mine with such an earnest loving gaze, with such a longing look as I may seek to read in vain; that voice whose gentle tones are hushed for evermore; that voice which I may never hear again except

when it comes to me in times of solemn worship, mingling with the organ's strains, and borne along as if from realms of blessed rest and light above, is ringing in my ears through all the howling of the wintry storm, as once again in sad deluding fancy I hold him on my knee; as once again I press him closer to my breast, and pray to God to give me life and strength to shield and guard my one poor lamb, my little crippled child.

My little child looks down on me from Heaven as I pen these lines, and why should I write of these things now? I cannot bring him back; and, even if I could, God knows I would not dare to do it. Dear as he was to me, dear above all price, I could not seek to bring him back again. I have learnt to know that it is better far for me to have an angel resting on his Father's breast above, whilst I, as best I may, walk on the weary path of life alone—a lonely but neither an unhappy nor a discontented man. I have learnt long since to bear my grief in silence, to carry off my sorrow with a smile, and I know not why I write of these things now unless it be that the necessity of commencing this narrative has carried me back to the night on which it opens, and, in doing so, has awakened memories which time has softened and which resignation to the holy will of God has tempered with its chastening hand; memories which I do not seek unnecessarily to revive, but for which, thus awakened and revived, still less do I seek to offer any apology or excuse.

On the winter night of which I write I was in the very middle of one of those stories with which I sought to amuse my little child and make him feel less keenly the want of playmates more suited to his tender years, when we were suddenly disturbed by a loud knocking at the outer door. My old servant Roger, half valet, half butler, and major-domo in general, had already made every thing secure for the night, so that there was a great tramping of feet, a great unfastening of bolts and bars, and much confusion of various kinds, before he made his appearance in the room holding a slip of paper between his finger and thumb, very much as if he was afraid that it might suddenly start into life and inflict some deadly wound upon him.

"A Tellygraffer, sir," said Roger, handing the obnoxious article to me.

By "Tellygraffer" Roger meant to say "a Telegraphic message," but not being very accurate in his employment of words, especially such as had any reference to matters connected with the railway just opened through our village—a means of conveyance which Roger held in the most supreme abhorrence—I daresay he thought he had made quite near enough an approach to "Telegraphic" when he transformed it into "Tellygraffer." Roger is very old-fashioned, as becomes the major-domo of Farleye Hall. I should be afraid to make a guess at his age. I remember him for a great many years, more than

I should like to say, but he does not seem to me, so far as I can recollect him, to look one day older than he did when, nearly forty years ago, he dragged me out of the fish-pond into which I fell on one unlucky afternoon, which very probably would have brought my career to an abrupt conclusion if Roger had not happened to be upon the spot. I remember, as if it were but yesterday, how Roger rushed into the pond, and rescued me from the mud in which, a helpless urchin of some seven or eight years old, I was floundering hopelessly. I remember how, as soon as we were once more safe on land, he gave me one great shake, partly to dry me I suppose, and partly as an expression of his indignation at my unbecoming conduct, and then bore me off in haste to bed. I remember what a running to and fro there was about the house, what a rolling of my shivering limbs in blankets soft and warm, what a succession of hot drinks one after another until my head became quite light and I fell off into a heavy sleep. I remember how angry my father pretended to be as he shook his stick at me, and how he scolded my dear mother for giving way to tears, and crying as she chafed my numb cold hands. He little knew that I saw him crying too as he bent down over my little bed, and put his face close to mine, as he pretended to arrange the clothes. Amid all the hub-bub and confusion, here, there, and everywhere all at once, I see old Roger's cheery pleasant face as he flits in and

out, scolds the maids, and adds to the general uproar. Of course, considering that nearly forty years have rolled away since then, Roger must necessarily look an older man, but I cannot see it. His hair may be a little whiter and his form more bent, but his voice is just as hearty and as fresh, his face as wholesome and as ruddy in my eyes, as it was those forty years ago. Roger ruled me with a rod of iron when I was a boy, and he thinks he rules me with the same rod still; and as the faithful true old man is happy in the simple delusion I don't see any reason why I should destroy it. I was "Master Arty" forty years ago, and, in Roger's mouth I am "Master Arty" still. The brave old yeoman, my father, has passed away. My dear and gentle mother sleeps her long last sleep. The last of our race, my little crippled child and I, bide our time in Farleye Hall; and Roger rules, or thinks he rules, our simple household. I have said that Roger ruled me with a rod of iron during my boyish days, and even yet he sometimes lays down the law pretty strongly, and lets "Master Arty" have the benefit of his opinions without much reserve. But, faithful as he has ever been to our fortunes and our race, and dearly as Roger has loved the Farleyes of Farleye Hall, I think the old man's ever faithful love and service have centred now at the last in my helpless little boy. I know well the depth of Roger's love for me, but, dearly as he loves me, every now and then

he lets me have "a bit of his mind," as he expresses it, and "a taste of his tongue." If our cow take the distemper, or if the October brewing turn sour, it is certain to be my fault, as Roger, in giving me this taste of his tongue, does not fail to let me know. But, when he turns to my Pet, the old man's face grows soft, and the honest smile begins to play about his mouth. The rod of iron with which I am ruled is laid aside when there is question of the child. No scolding, no harsh words, no taste of his tongue, nothing but the outpouring of the honest service of his true old heart to be lavished on the object of his love. In the early spring I see Roger trudging about our great wilderness of a garden, trying to discover the first nest of the season, that our Pet (we never call him by any other name) may be carried off, crowing with delight, to see it. Then, what visits day after day to carry crumbs to the parents, to get stolen glimpses at the beautiful bright eggs lying so snugly in the bottom of the nest, till, at length, the rapture is complete on the appearance of the young birds. In the bright beautiful summer days how often do I watch Roger bustling about to get through the work which he deludes himself with the notion that he performs, in order that as soon as his simple plate is polished and his cloth laid for our frugal dinner, he may get the child into his invalid's chair and wheel him away for a long day in the forest glades of Ravenshale.

When I come upon them, as if by accident, two or three hours later, it would be hard to say whether the old man or the child is the happier of the two. When winter has set in and they are confined to the house, how many hours they spend together in its old out-of-the-way nooks and corners; and sometimes, when they little dream I hear them, I am fain to hide my face for some brief moments between my hands, as I listen to the strange, half-earnest, and half-childish prattle of the pair. Thus our life glides harmlessly and innocently away. As I have said, the love and service paid for sixty years and more to father and to son seem concentrated now upon the feeble child who reigns supreme in the old man's faithful heart; and although Roger is to all appearance still a hearty and a hale old man, I feel sure that if anything happened to the fragile plant we tend with such watchful never-dying care old Roger's time would not be long delayed.

I have kept Roger standing a long time with the "Tellygraffer" between his finger and his thumb whilst I gave you this slight insight into his history. I must keep you just one moment more whilst I explain the reason of that expression of supreme abhorrence and contempt which has possession of Roger's face as he hands the detested article to me. Roger, being so very old, and belonging in fact to another generation, it is not to be wondered at that he is very old-fashioned in his ways, and that he has a great

contempt for what he calls new-fangled notions. Accordingly, when it was announced, some years ago, that the new line of railway was to run through our village, with a station not a quarter of a mile from Farleye Hall, Roger became greatly excited, and held forth on several occasions, as I was told, with great force and power on the subject, to an admiring audience at the bar of the Red Lion. On ordinary occasions I believe that Roger is accustomed to express some very uncomfortable misgivings as to the future prospects and destiny of the parish clerk of Ravenshale Church, to which that functionary retorts by more than insinuating that Roger is an out-and-out old papist, and that you may see the very picture of him any day you like to look into Fox's Book of the Blessed Martyrs who were roasted in the time of Queen Mary. In presence of the dreaded invasion, however, the foes proclaimed a truce, and spent I don't know how many days in going round the village together, soliciting signatures to some absurd petition which they got drawn up, and which they seemed to think would settle the railway for evermore. But Roger's wrath never reached its climax until a rumour went abroad to the effect that the route of the intended line had been changed, and that, instead of merely skirting our village, it was to cut direct through it, taking in its way at least two of the old Farleye fields. I am glad to say this plan was not persevered in, since I confess

that I could not have looked unmoved upon what would have seemed very like a desecration of my ancestral acres, but at one time it appeared very probable that such would be the case. Like a reasonable man I endeavoured to make up my mind for the worst, and to receive with equanimity that which I could not prevent; but Roger was perfectly grand in his fury on the momentous occasion, and how many bits of his mind, and how many tastes of his tongue he treated me to before the affair was finally settled, I should be quite afraid to say. "What I want to know, Master Arty," he said to me again and again, "is, whether there is any law left in England or not?"

"Of course there's law left, Roger," said I, "how can you ask such a foolish question?"

"How can I ask such a foolish question," answered Roger, more wrathfully than ever, "now, Master Arty, I'll just give you a bit o' my mind. Here are you, the master of Farleye Hall, that came down to you from t'old squire that is dead and gone, God rest his soul, and that came down to him from his fathers before him, a deal farther back than I can remember, or any body else for the matter o' that; and, I should think," Roger went on with as much irony as he could throw into his voice, "that when your time's out you'd like to send Farleye Hall down to the young master as you got it. But, how can you do that," asked Roger triumphantly, "if this puffing-billy of a thing comes in, and, before you know where

you are, whisks off two or three of your best fields. You don't want to give up your fields, God forgive you if you did, and yet you can't help yourself. You're just like a hare when t' dogs is close on her; she can nobbut sit down and stare at 'em. Them dogs, and they're nowt but dogs," cried Roger shaking his stick at his foes as if he had them before him, "is going to steal t' Long Close, which t' old Squire allays said was t' best he had, and they're going to take t' best corner off t' Spring Top, and I heard 'em say that they were going to run right through t' middle of t' Home Meadow, and you can't help yourself. You can nobbut sit down and stare at 'em while they rob you of all you have, and then you inquire how I can ask you such a question. Now, that's a bit o' my mind, and I don't think its so very foolish after all, Master Arty."

"O, well now, Roger," I answered, as soon as I could get a word in, "we must be reasonable. There is no question of robbery, because we shall be well paid for whatever land they may require, and, as they must procure an Act of Parliament before they touch a rood of it, you know we cannot help ourselves."

"O dear, O dear," cried Roger, throwing up his hands, "nobbut listen to that, now. Acts o' Parliament, indeed! Why Mr. Perkins, the parish clerk, and me argued that point this very mornin'. Not that Mr. Perkins and me generally agrees about matters, which is'nt to be expected, considerin'

that he's no better nor a benighted old Protestan', but we both said that such a thing as an Act o' Parliament to take a man's property from him when he doesn't want to give it up, was never heard of. That 'ud be a pretty Act o' Parliament, indeed! Worse nor highway robbery ten times over! You know well enough that if there was one field t' old Squire loved above another it was that Long Close, and you talk about letting them thieves have it as if it was'nt worth a fiddle stick. O Master Arty, Master Arty, I never thought to hear you talk in that way. I do believe you'd sit down and let 'em turn us out o' Farleye Hall where we've lived so many hundred years," cried Roger, unconsciously employing a rather far-fetched figure of speech, "but only let me catch them surveying chaps, with their spy-glasses and their mogany boxes, and their three-legged peep-show things, on our land, and I'll let 'em know who's master at Farleye, spite of all their acts o' Parliament, see if I don't," added Roger, who, by this time, had worked himself into a tremendous state of excitement. And, sure enough, some days later, when two or three stout young men from the surveyor's office made their appearance at the gate of the Long Close so often mentioned, they found Roger already there, with a pitchfork some six feet long in his hand. I suppose his new ally, Mr. Perkins, and he had held a long discussion on the legal bearings of the matter, and had come to the conclusion that all

that was required in order to secure Roger from any unpleasant consequences which might result from the assault which he contemplated upon the surveyors was to give them three solemn warnings to desist from their undertaking. At all events, they had scarcely commenced their operations, when poor old Roger appeared before them, pitchfork in hand, and boiling over with indignation. "Trespassers," cried Roger, "I warn you once, I warn you twice, I warn you three times," and the warnings having had no other effect than to raise a loud shout of laughter, Roger charged the surveying apparatus with all his might and main. The conflict was not of long duration. I believe Roger succeeded in upsetting the theodolite, but in a moment more his pitchfork was lying in the next field, and himself at the bottom of a dry ditch, whilst the surveyors went on with their work as if this little episode had not occurred. Roger returned home sadly crest-fallen, and although eventually the line of railway did not run through the Farleye domain, the old man could never be brought to regard it with anything like kindly feelings, and, to the last hour of his life he refused, except on one memorable occasion to be hereafter mentioned, to put his foot into a railway carriage, or travel one yard by train.

Having thus sufficiently explained the state of Roger's feelings in regard to the "Tellygraffer," which, as being essentially connected with rail-

ways, comes in for its due share of detestation, it is high time that I take it from his hand and read its contents.

“Mrs. Lionel Ravenshale to Mr. Arthur Farleye.”

“Lionel is very ill—despaired of—He prays your presence—Please to come without delay, or it may be too late.”

As I read the message, so brief and yet so full of deepest meaning, a mist passed across my eyes, and the paper dropped from my hand. A moment more, and all was bustle and confusion in our little household. Spite of the fierce and wintry weather which raged outside, as soon as I had despatched a brief message in return to the effect that I would start by the earliest train by which I could leave, I began to make instant preparation for my departure. It would be bitter weather truly that could keep me from the death-bed of Lionel Ravenshale. I packed the few articles which I required. With many careful injunctions repeated again and again, I left my Pet in charge of Roger and the nurse who had been in our family as long as Roger himself; knowing well that the only danger which could happen to my darling in my absence would be from excess of loving kindness and of tender care. I went to bed, but not to sleep, and long before day had broken through the wintry sky, I was speeding on my way as fast as the train could bear me through the snow which every now-and-then threatened to

bar our passage altogether, and made our journey seem to me, in my impatient longing, as if it would never, never, reach its close.

It is a long story, and I may as well tell it to you now, how it has come to pass that, whilst his father never moves a step, I am thus hurrying through the winter's snow that I may look my last look into his glazing eyes, that I may receive the last whispered words of Lionel, the Heir of Ravenshale.

CHAPTER III.

THE FARLEYES OF FARLEYE.

I HAVE said that it is a long story, and in order to begin at the beginning, I must go back through many years, even to the time when I was a happy boy in the halls of that noble college where my youthful days were spent in such innocence and peace. And, as I write, though I have not seen it now for many years, the dear and well-remembered spot is as clearly present to my sight as when, one gloomy autumn morning, I turned round to take my last look of the towers that rose so nobly in the distance, and dashed away the tears that blinded me till I could scarcely see, that yet once more I might look upon the stately pile which seemed to nestle in the sheltering bosom of the Fell that rose, dim and indistinct, in the cloudy horizon. The beautiful ruins of the old abbey which I had so often explored were under my feet, but now they appealed to me in vain. Far away on my right rose majestically the hill, famous in stories of witchcraft and unholy lore, which I had so often climbed, but I did not even think of it now. With the feeling deep down in my heart that I was leaving my

happiest and my best years behind me, I turned my back upon the glorious ruins that on any other occasion would have filled me with delight; I let the river, whose banks were so beautiful in their autumn dress, flow unheeded past my feet, as yet once more I strained my eyes to take in, in that long last look as it proved to be, the stately towers from whose summit the guardian eagles look so proudly down, the graceful church before whose beautiful altar the prayers of my best days had so often gone up to God, the grand old court-yard which carried you back at once to the times when belted knights and ruffled dames paced up and down its ample space, or ascended with such stately step and ceremonious grace the noble flight of steps that lead to the baronial dining hall which skirts its farthest side. Yes, church and corridor, refectory and picture-gallery, court-yard and dormitory, towers and fish-ponds, play-ground and gardens, rise up before my eyes, and through all the lapse of intervening years are as clear to my sight as they were on that well-remembered morning when I dashed away the tears that, ere I turned my back upon them, I might take one long, one fond and earnest look, at all those objects whose image love had written far too deeply on my heart for any space, or any length of years, to wash away. Through all my sorrows and through all my cares, my heart goes back again instinctively to those early days—to those days when I was one of a happy band

whose young steps were trained, whose young hearts were raised to God, in all the innocent freshness of our guileless youth, by those holy men who guarded us and loved us with more than father's love and care; who sympathized with us in all our innocent sports; who taught us how to offer to God the fair first fruits of our opening lives; how to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. Yes, with a love that can never forget, with a gratitude that can never repay, with a tongue that from sheer inability shrinks from seeking to express the one or the other, my thoughts, my heart, my love, are with you still my fathers, as keenly and as truly, as fondly and as deeply, as when I was a happy boy watched over by your fostering care, guarded as a Catholic boy can alone be guarded, privileged as none but such as he can ever be.

I have said that the Farleyes of Farleye Hall had never pretended to be more than yeomen. I have also said that our race had been settled on the same spot for several hundred years; and, although our estates had been plundered, and our forefathers imprisoned, fined, and mulcted in many and grievous ways during the persecuting days of Elizabeth and James, still, enough of the old acres had come down to the brave old yeoman, my father, to enable him to hold up his head with the best of the country. A Farleye had laid down his life, a holy priest and a blessed martyr, at Smithfield. His pale grave face, and the

solemn, almost sad, look of his large dark eyes, as he was portrayed in a likeness which hung in our hall, is one of the earliest and the deepest of my recollections. The holy right hand which was chopped off by the executioner's bloody knife was still in our possession, and I am certain that the wealth of England would not have bought it from us. It lay in a costly shrine in our little chapel, the object of our deepest reverence and affection. It descended from father to son, a precious heirloom to be guarded at any cost, and above all price; an ever-speaking, ever-living testimony of the Faith which was in us, the Faith for which the Farleyes of Farleye could and did thank God they had never feared to fight and to die. From one cause and another we had lost many of our ancestral acres, but we felt well that a Farleye could never be poor so long as he possessed that holy hand. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, I held my little child up in my arms, even as my own father had held me, that he might kiss the holy relic; and I taught him, even as I myself had been taught, to value it beyond all price, to love it beyond all expression, to rest in boundless confidence under its protection. We looked with anxious expectation to the day when the holy English martyrs should be raised to the worship of our altars, and our hearts swelled within our breasts as we thought that when that day came one of our race would surely be numbered in the blessed band. Meanwhile, we lived

on in simple faith, and we never wondered when the sick came to pray before our relic, and, thanks to the goodness of God and their own unwavering trust, went away cured of whatsoever infirmity they had.

It was our proudest boast that no Farleye had ever been a traitor to his Faith. We had been plundered of our possessions for its sake. The very choicest glebe lands which the Rector of Ravenshalle possessed were well known to have been ours in the olden times. We had suffered for our Faith, we had fought for it, and at least one of our race had died for it under the executioner's knife; but, thanks be to God, we had never betrayed it. We could take the stranger to the old monumental brass in our chapel, and, as we pointed out to him the names of all our forefathers up to that *Evrard de Farlie*, 1478, the first of our race of whom we have any distinct record, we could prove to him that they had all died in the faith and peace of Christ, we could pray eternal rest and light upon their souls. Hence it was, perchance, that we were looked upon as a somewhat proud and reserved race, who considered ourselves little inferior to the Ravenshalles themselves. Reserved we may have been, we could scarcely have been anything else; but I don't think that we were proud in the ordinary acceptance of the term. We were in one sense, no doubt, proud of our race, proud of our Faith, proud of our fidelity to it through many

years of trial and bitter persecution, and who shall dare to blame us for this? Who shall dare to blame us, if, in this respect, we thought ourselves in no wise lower than the Ravenshalles? Their race was scarcely more ancient than our own, and, whilst it was true that we had never risen beyond the rank of yeomen whilst they had been ennobled by Queen Mary, could they say, as we could, that there had been no falterers in their line, no betrayers of their Faith?

On the opposite side of the village, about a mile from Farleye Hall, dwelt the Ravenshalles of Ravenshalle. Much richer in worldly wealth, much higher in the social scale than ourselves, it was hardly to be expected that there should be much intimacy between the two families. A certain amount of intimacy was almost inevitable. A chaplain was attached to their family, and it was in their chapel that we attended Mass and the other services of our church. We were almost the only two Catholic families in the village, certainly the only two of any position or rank in life; and, hence, as I have just said, a certain amount of intimacy between us was almost inevitable. I remember well the admiration with which I used to gaze at the stately Hall, as our humble conveyance, driven by Roger in a very antique suit of livery, made its way up the long straight avenue. Not unfrequently, Sir Lionel would appear at the door of the Hall and exchange kindly and neighbourly greetings with

my father. Quite as frequently those greetings included an invitation to lunch after Mass, an invitation which I was never glad to hear my father accept, since I was always ill at ease until we had fairly left the grandeur of the Hall once more behind our backs. When I was a boy the baronet was in the prime of life, as noble and as handsome a gentleman as trod on English ground. He was a widower with one son about my own age. I need not say more about Sir Lionel at present, except that I was always very much afraid of him, and always very glad to escape from his presence, unless I add that he was always very kind to me in his own distant way, and always loaded me with the choicest fruits on his table. If I had seen more of his son, I daresay that we should have become very intimate as was but natural; but the chilly stateliness of those solemn luncheons was an effectual bar to any thing like freedom of intercourse or interchange of sentiment; and it was not until later on, as I shall duly relate, that I learned to know Lionel Ravenshale better—learned to admire his noble qualities of mind and heart—laid the foundation of an intimate and never-dying friendship, which left its mark and cast its shadow no less upon his future than upon my own.

CHAPTER IV.

IN MEMORIAM.

I HAD scarcely reached the age of nine years when the manner of my future education began to form the subject of frequent and grave family debates. My father did not make much pretension to any great amount of book learning, and, what he possessed, he had acquired, I fancy, in a desultory kind of way from any travelling tutor who had happened to come in the direction of Farleye Hall. He was determined, however, that my education should be of a much more complete character, but the difficulty was how to secure it. For some time, Mr. Perkins, parish clerk and village schoolmaster, used to come to the Hall, much to the disgust of Roger, for this was before the days of the railway, and impart to me from his own store such draughts of learning as he deemed suited to my tender years. Spite, however, of Mr. Perkins's assumptions of wisdom and deep scholarship, my father soon came to the conclusion that we had reached the bottom of that well of learning, and that nothing more was to be extracted from the worthy pedagogue. After many consultations with my mother it was deter-

mined that there was no way of securing that education which was deemed fitting for me unless by sending me to college. Now, as my father had never been to college himself, he naturally enough consulted his friend Sir Lionel Ravenshale on the important question as to which of our English colleges I should be sent. At this time young Ravenshale had already been at college some six months; and the result of the interview was that my father came home and announced that he had, on the advice of his friend Sir Lionel, determined to send me to the same establishment as that in which the baronet's son was receiving his education.

What a bustle of preparation there was, to be sure! I fancy that our village tailor must have lost his rest for several nights, he was in such a state of feverish anxiety lest my new clothes should not be up to the requirements of the age, or lest anything in their cut should betray the rustic origin of the artist who had designed them. Then the fuss there was with Roger! As it was considered a very solemn occasion, Roger was to accompany my father when he took me to college; and Roger's livery was not in the best of trim, having, amongst other accidents, sustained the loss of two buttons which could only be procured after sundry troublesome correspondence from York, inasmuch as the aforesaid buttons were embellished with our family crest and our motto, "Faithful and True."

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At last, however, everything was ready, and after an entertainment, partly tea and partly supper, given in honour of the event to every one who could lay any claim to be present, and at which Mr. Perkins made a great speech, predicting all kinds of honours and distinctions for his former pupil, a speech to which, under the circumstances, I listened with a very sorrowful heart and a very rueful face, my father and I, attended by Roger in his best suit of livery, the buttons all complete and a gold band about his hat, started for the college in the North which had been selected as the place of my education.

What a weary journey it was! We jolted along for two days and a night in the stage coach, till I was nearly tired to death, more especially as I was afraid to stretch out my legs lest I should by any chance awaken a cross old gentleman who sat opposite to me and snored ferociously all day through. His feet were cased in flannel bandages until they looked for all the world like corpulent bolsters, and every time he opened his eyes he glared at me so fiercely, and with a look that seemed to say that if I did but touch his toes ever so lightly he would kill me on the spot, that I travelled in mortal dread and terror for my life. I think I must unconsciously have touched him on a tender part during the night, for, on a sudden, we were all awoke from our uneasy slumbers by a roar which threw me into such convulsions of terror that my father was obliged

to take me on his knee and hold me there the remainder of the night. On the second night of our journey we slept at a quaint old country town, and next morning posted on to our destination. We had driven, as well as I remember, some fifteen miles or more, and had just passed through a small but straggling village, when, on suddenly turning a corner, the great front of the college stood in all its imposing grandeur and beauty full before us. Later on I was able to appreciate and admire the beauty of its architecture, its venerable air of antiquity, and the admirable taste which had been displayed in the selection of its site, but I am free to confess that, on the present occasion, my predominant impressions were very much similar to those which I imagine a convict to feel when he beholds for the first time the exterior of the model prison in which the remainder of his weary life is to be fretted and fumed away. These sensations were by no means lessened when Roger, descending from our vehicle as it drew up at the noble Norman gateway, proceeded to ring a bell which seemed to me fully as large as that of the parish church at Ravenshale, and which resounded with a peal loud enough to wake the seven sleepers. Its echoes had scarcely died away when the lay brother who acted as porter threw open the large folding doors and ushered us into a magnificent court-yard, or, more properly, quadrangle. Directly facing us as we entered stood a stately

flight of steps leading up to the baronial dining hall, where, in the olden times gone by, the ancient family who formerly owned the estates entertained their friends and retainers at many a solemn banquet, and at many a joyous revel. To our right, occupying the whole of one side of the square, stood the picture gallery, an apartment of great length and of wondrous beauty of proportion and finish. On the opposite side of the square, which, in my time, was principally occupied by the domestic offices, now stands, I am told, a chapel of a style in keeping with the rest of the buildings. I do not speak here of the college church, the modern buildings erected for scholastic purposes, or the beautiful gardens laid out in the quaint Dutch style with thick yew hedges and trim fantastic beds, since I merely describe the impressions made upon me as my father and I followed our guide through that magnificent quadrangle which, I fancy, has few equals among "the stately homes of England," into the parlour where the Rector presently waited upon us. His pleasant cheerful ruddy face, the soft but hearty tones of his voice, above all, the kindly and benevolent expression of his full grey eye, did much to make me feel at ease, and remove those impressions of dread and terror with which I had first entered my new home; and, before my father left me, which he did at the end of a couple of days, I felt quite reconciled to my lot.

I had scarcely been introduced into the play-

ground, where, I need not add, that I felt shy and timid enough, when young Lionel Ravenshale came running up to me and seized me by both hands. Of course I already knew him, but, as I have said, our intercourse had been so slight, and had been carried on under such freezing and repressing circumstances, that it had never developed into anything like intimacy, and, hence, unless the first advances had come from him, I, with my natural timidity and sensitive nature, should never have dreamed of entering into any closer relations with the Heir of Ravenshale, as he was generally called in our part of the world, than those of the merest acquaintance. However, as I have just said, I had scarcely made my appearance when he was by my side, greeting me with an earnest heartiness which I did not in the least expect, and which was all the more gratifying on that very account.

I remember him well, as if it were but yesterday, as throwing down the cricket bat which he held in his hand he came running over to me. The Ravenshalles were a handsome family, with long curling auburn hair, full blue eyes, and that fresh ruddy colour on their cheeks which gives a man what we call, rightly or wrongly I know not, a thoroughly Saxon look; and I venture to think that, of all the Ravenshalles dead and gone, there had never been a handsomer, more gentlemanly, or more truly noble looking a one, than young Lionel as he stood before me in all the freshness

and the honest comeliness of his early youth, the last of his race, the representative of all their honours, and the heir to all their estates. Little, little did I think, as we stood face to face on that bright summer morning, as I looked upon him, the very type of youth, of hope, of prosperity without drawback or limit—of all that was to come to pass, of all the waves of bitter tribulation and of deepest sorrow which were to roll so relentlessly across the ocean of his life. But, let me not anticipate. Let it rather suffice to say that, from that moment, were laid the foundations of a steady, earnest, manly friendship between the Heir of Ravenshale and myself, which grew with our growth, and increased with our years; which suffered many shocks, but no diminution; which brought bitter sorrow to me, but which brightened up with a golden gleam of hope and consolation the darkest and most trying moment of his life—a friendship to which I can look back after the lapse of many sorrowing years and thank my God that I was ever faithful to my friend, that I was ever faithful, to the best of my ability, to the very utmost of my power, to the solemn responsibilities and the heavy charges which that friendship laid upon me.

Travelling on very quickly as I am to my long last home, with the shadows of the great evermore already thick about me, I look back through many troubled years to those happy days, the days of my guileless innocent college life, and how pleasant and how blessed they appear to me,

God only knows. I think there are many happy days in the life of every pure, single-hearted, and God-serving man; but I think too, and I am certain, that there are no days so thoroughly happy, so full of innocent and harmless pleasures, so pleasing to God and man, as the college days of a frank, manly, religious, thoroughly Catholic boy. And I am certain, too, that no amount of after gratitude, no amount of never-dying love, of warmest recollection, can ever repay one tithe of what a Catholic boy owes to such tender fathers and such faithful guardians as those under whose care my early days were so happily and so innocently spent. If I were able to express myself better and more strongly I would do so. If I were able to put into words the overflowing feelings of my grateful heart to you, my early masters and my more than fathers, I would write them down in deepest love, the living record of my warmest, never-failing gratitude. But, there are some feelings so deep down in the heart that the words in which they may be expressed have not yet been found, feelings which that grateful heart would gladly speak if the tongue could put them into words. Such are the feelings of my heart as it clings to the memory of my college days—as it turns to you, my fathers, in the fulness of its grateful love—as it prays you to accept this its very silence as the most eloquent tribute which it can pay to that watchful care, that tender love, that holy zeal, and that unobtrusive simple sanctity

which led our young hearts to God, which taught us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, which sought to make us true, honourable, and pure-hearted boys as the surest way of making us true, pure, and honest men, and which accomplished all these things even more powerfully by the force of your example than by your teaching or your precepts.

CHAPTER V.

TREATS OF A CERTAIN HORRIBLE AND UNPROVOKED
MURDER, WITH SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES
RESULTING THEREFROM.

LIONEL RAVENSHALLE was my beau ideal of a thoroughly frank, manly, honest, pure-hearted, Catholic boy. I don't know that he was a very hard student or that he had any very great love for Latin or Greek, but I do know that he had a very great love for cricket, foot-ball, swimming, and all other manly games; and he was certainly a pleasant sight to look upon, and one which I remember well, as he headed the Yorkshire side in our great foot-ball matches at Shrovetide. I have said that he was thoroughly frank, and thoroughly honest. I think he would have died rather than do a mean action or tell a lie. He was thoroughly pure-hearted and religious, as a boy ought to be, without parade or obtrusiveness, with a piety that was warm and tender without becoming effeminate. With Lionel Ravenshaller, as with every properly trained and educated Catholic youth, religion was a reality, a thing for week-day as well as for Sunday use. It influenced and governed all his actions. It taught him how to restrain the pas-

sions of his youth, how to direct his thoughts, and words, and actions, to the love and service of his God; in a word, it taught him, even in the fulness of his youthful strength and in the warmth of his young blood, to live such a life of hearty innocence and of genuine piety as the Holy Catholic Faith can alone teach a youth how to live. He was the most cheerful amongst us all, his laugh was the loudest, and his spirits were the lightest of all his companions, and how could it be otherwise—for where could you look for the hearty honest smile, if not upon the face of such a one as Lionel Ravenshale? Where could you look for the light heart, if not in the breast of an innocent Catholic boy? Where could you look for the gay and ardent spirits which are almost infectious in their fulness and buoyancy, if you did not look for them in him who as yet has been unsullied by contact with the world; in him who, perchance, possesses his soul in the very freshness and the fragrant sweetness of its baptismal innocence? Later on, it may be, he may learn to know the world with its weary weight of sin and of sorrow. The time may come when he will know what it is to look back with a sickening and a sorrowing heart, with a yearning all the more bitter that it can never again be thoroughly satiated, to the innocence and the true happiness of those early college days, which, alas and alas! have passed away for ever, never to return—never to be repurchased even by the ransom of a world. Yes,

the days of sorrow and disappointment, of aimless struggle, of talents thrown away and of opportunities lost; yea, even the days of darkness and of sin may come in all their crushing weight upon him who, but a few short years ago, was the happy innocent college boy; and, I grant you, that when these dark days come, a man may sit down and cover his face with his hands—may weep those bitter scalding tears which, although they be wrung from his heart's inmost core, can never cause his blighted innocence to bloom again in the primeval freshness of its baptismal grace—may in the fulness of his oppression, in the heaviness of his burthen, turn his face to the wall and pray for the death that will not come; but I say, too, that if there were not in his life, days when the very foreshadowing of these things were mysteries to him, he was never a real Catholic boy, never such a one as Lionel Ravenshale when first I knew him. There has been something radically wrong, something terribly astray, in the childhood of such a one. He has been poisoned even in the very spring of his days; his opening life has been blasted with the taint which, thank God, is as rare in our honest manly college boys as, I fear me, it is common in those who know not the fostering care, the loving vigilance, the potent grace which comes alike to boy and man through the ministry of God's Holy Catholic Church.

Lionel Ravenshale was the leader and captain in all our college games, but he was also the

prefect or head of our college sodality in honour of the Holy Mother of God. Religious as he was, and innocent of hand and heart as he no less undoubtedly was, there was, nevertheless, in his composition a dash of genuine fun, and a taste for mischief and frolic, which, I fancy, is generally found more or less in every boy who is worth much. This love of fun, and of mischief, if you will, of course frequently led him into troubles and collisions with the college authorities. I remember vividly the worst scrape into which poor Lionel ever fell; and this was how it came to pass. One holy-day, when taking a walk in the country, we happened to pass through the farm yard of a certain denizen of the neighbourhood who did not regard us boys with any great amount of affection. There was a great deal of poultry about, and some one suggested that we should seize a certain old drake who was making himself very conspicuous, and bear him off in order to feast upon him at our leisure, and as opportunity might serve. It was a thoroughly boyish suggestion, made without reflection, and acted upon on the spur of the moment. I cannot say who actually seized the luckless drake, but, at all events, Lionel in a very few seconds found the prize, with his neck twisted round, in his possession. It was no easy task to get him safely into the college without attracting the prefects' attention; but even when we had succeeded thus far, our troubles had only really begun; and I do

believe that poor boys were never tormented, as we were by the possession of that horrid bird. In the first place, we didn't know where to keep the prize. It would never do to leave him in a desk in the study hall, as these were liable to be examined at any time; and it was only after much deliberation that one of the party was inspired by a brilliant idea upon which we acted. There was a fellow in the college who was remarkable for enormously large feet; and this brilliant idea was to the effect that we should hide the drake in one of this individual's walking shoes until such time as we could take ulterior proceedings. After chopping off his head and feet, we succeeded with much squeezing in getting the mutilated drake into its hiding place, where we left him for a day, wishing him at the same time at the very bottom of the sea.

It was very plain, however, that the prize could not be left very long in that place of concealment, and, hence, after another secret and hurried consultation, we determined that, inasmuch as we had him, we would cook and eat him at the first opportunity. I think it never suggested itself to us that, before he could be cooked, he would have to be plucked, until one of the party who was rather notorious for his fondness for the good things of this life in general, and for tarts in particular, enquired whether we were going to eat him feathers and all. We stood confounded at the idea. Who was to pluck him, and how in

the world was it to be done? How we did detest that horrid bird! We determined to steal out under cover of the darkness and throw him over the boundary wall, and thus have done with him for ever; but the youth just referred to suggested, first, that if we did so, the drake was certain to be discovered, and his death traced home to us; and, secondly, that as we had abducted him in order to feast upon him, we might as well endeavour to do so, until the impossibility of accomplishing our object was clearly demonstrated. After a very warm discussion it was determined to have him cooked as soon as possible, the ingenious youth who had suggested the hiding of the prize in a shoe undertaking to convey the drake up stairs under his coat when he went to bed that night, and to pluck him in the morning as soon as it was light, before the sounding of the bell. This part of his duty he discharged faithfully, carefully depositing the feathers in his pillow case as he tore them, as best he could, off the poor drake's back. When he had completed his task he crept softly out of his dormitory, and, opening the window, gave the bag containing the feathers a vigorous shake. In his haste to get rid of the spoil he never noticed that it was raining hard, and, hence, his astonishment was little less than that of his fellow-students and the prefects, when, on coming down in the morning, they found a considerable portion of the play-ground, immediately under

the dormitory windows, literally covered with feathers.

Here was another complication. The prefects were evidently on the *qui vive*, so, that, whatever was to be done must be done quickly. Besides, what from squeezing him into the shoe, and the rough handling which he had undergone during the operation of plucking, it was plain, to at least one of our senses, that he wouldn't keep much longer. At length, Lionel was empowered to offer a bribe of a shilling to one of the boys who cleaned our shoes, if he would undertake to cook the by this time obnoxious and detested drake, and leave him when dressed under one of our beds in the dormitory. To our satisfaction we found that the domestic in question was open to a bribe, although he was not to be purchased so cheaply as we anticipated. He knew his own value too well for that, and it was only after a good deal of haggling and bargaining, that he undertook to carry out our views in consideration of a sum of two shillings and sixpence paid down, a great deal more than the game itself was worth by this time. Finally, however, the negotiations were brought to a conclusion, and our new ally was informed where he would find the drake. He undertook to cook him in first-rate style, (we learnt afterwards that he boiled the bird in a large pot which was used for all manner of dirty jobs) and leave him safely under Lionel's bed when cooked. So far so good. That night when all was still in the dormitory,

and the prefects had retired, the four or five of us who were in the secret crept silently out of our respective sleeping places, and, armed with our pocket knives, made our way to Lionel's dormitory.—“All right,” whispered Lionel, “here he is, and he smells delicious. Don't lose time, now, or the prefects may be up again.” The largest knife we had was handed over to Lionel, who proceeded to carve the dainty dish which had cost us so much anxiety and trouble. It appeared to me, as I watched the process of carving, in the twilight of a summer's night, that the task of separating the limbs of the hapless drake was more difficult than it ought to be. Presently, however, Lionel handed me what he called a drumstick, repeating at the same time his injunctions to lose no time as the danger of being discovered by the prefects was imminent. I don't wish to calumniate that wretched bird, since the fault may have been in the boiling, but, at all events, I might just as well have endeavoured to chew the sole of my shoe as that drumstick which had been handed to me, no doubt as a savoury, and certainly as a dearly purchased morsel. I shall never forget the look of unutterable disgust which we mutually exchanged as the conviction passed across our minds that after all our trouble, all our expense, and all the risks we had run, it was simply impossible to masticate the remains of that tough and loathsome bird. We contended manfully with the difficulty, but it was of no avail. There is a limit to endu-

rance and self-sacrifice, even such as ours. If it had been in human nature to swallow that bird, I am sure we should have accomplished the feat, if it had only been to show our detestation and abhorrence of him, and to cover our defeat. But, it became evident to us in a very short time that no human teeth were equal to the task, and, so, with one rueful look at his friends, each one collected that portion of the drake which had fallen to his share, and crept back to his own dormitory, a wiser and a sadder boy.

And it would have been well if the matter had ended here. But, whilst we had been involved in our own little troubles of hiding, of plucking, of cooking, and, finally, of disposing of his remains, the farmer had missed his precious bird, and had come down, foaming with rage, to the college, demanding the immediate restoration of what he called, the finest drake in all —shire. There was a solemn investigation into the whole affair by the college authorities. The vengeful farmer tendered his depositions and was ready to swear to them if necessary. The prefects set all their wits to work, and, sure enough, discovered some of the feathers in the dormitory of our friend who had plucked the prize. The wretched shoe-black, after pocketing our half-crown, to say nothing of spoiling our feast by his miserable attempt at cooking, broke down before the stern face and the awful threats of the Father Minister, and confessed the whole affair. I don't know

how the college authorities managed to pacify the irate and law-seeking farmer, but, I do know, and I have good reason to remember, the condign and plenary satisfaction which we were called upon to render to outraged justice and discipline; and I can say, with perfect sincerity, that if all stolen fruit turn out as bitter to those who pluck it as the plucking (I speak metaphorically) of that loathsome and tough old drake proved to us who were concerned in his abduction and violent death, it must be a very unsatisfactory process, and scarcely worth the trouble which so many persons bestow upon its cultivation.

Poor Lionel! Full of life, of fun, and of youthful spirits as he was, this was the most grievous scrape in which I ever knew him engaged, and, after all, it was'nt very bad. And how well I remember the half-serious, half-comic expression of his noble handsome face, as he often and often argued the matter with me. "You know, Arthur," he used to say, "I could stand any thing but calling that brute the finest drake in all ——shire. Of course I knew very well that the first time we went to confession we should have to make restitution for him, if we hadn't already done so, and I was quite prepared for that. I didn't mind paying for him, although I don't see how a bird of his years could be of any value to any body, but the idea of that Holden coming down here, and kicking up a row, declaring that his drake was the finest bird in all

the country side, when, as you yourself know very well, the old brute was so tough that we actually couldn't chew him, I could stand anything but that, but that's too bad, even for ——shire. Talk about a Yorkshire bite, indeed! Thank goodness, I never knew such a tough Yorkshire bite as that old drake, at all events."

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERY—IN THE MORAL ORDER.

I REMAINED at college eight or nine years—years of true unclouded happiness in the very best sense of the word. I have already said that the intimacy formed between myself and the Heir of Ravenshale grew with our growth, and developed with our years; but this expression gives but a faint idea of that earnest, steady friendship which each passing year only served to bring out more truly and more strongly than before. To me this intercourse, this friendship, formed on pure and innocent affection, and on that mutual attraction which draws some hearts together just as powerfully as others are mutually repelled—this friendship, nourished, developed, and cemented by mutual esteem, mutual respect, and mutual emulation in the cultivation of every thing that was virtuous, manly, and best in our nature, was of inestimable value. I had neither brother nor sister. I was a lonely child, and yet, there was in my heart that yearning after love and sympathy, that yearning for some one on whom to pour out the innocent affections of that heart, which must, and does exist, in the soul of

every pure and uncontaminated child. Of course, I loved my father and mother as truly and as deeply as child ever loved his parents; but the love of parents is not the same as, and can never wholly take the place of, that love of brethren, which even Holy Writ brings before us when it reminds us what a good and a pleasant thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Hence, I say, that it was a matter of inestimable value to me that, in the natural loneliness, and what might easily have been the dangerous and destructive loneliness, of my boyhood, I found one so thoroughly true, so thoroughly noble, manly, and pure as Lionel Ravenshale, on whom to lavish and spend that waste of boyish love, that outpouring of an innocent heart, which would have been lavished and spent on brother or sister if I had possessed them, and, which, possessing them not, I might so easily have spent upon unworthy objects, to my own irreparable injury and loss.

And I am fain to believe, too, that the intercourse which was as pleasant as it was useful to me, was no less so to him. Like myself he was an only child, but he was still more lonely, more desolate than I was, and stood more in need of some one to take a brother's place in his heart and love. I had no brother or sister, but I was blessed with as fond, as dear, as true a mother, as ever shed the radiance of her love upon her children's path, or wrote her memory in letters of gold upon their grateful hearts. I had as honest,

as manly, and, withal, as tender-hearted a man for my father as ever watched the growing years of a child, and was only happy in proportion as that child grew in virtue, in vigour, and in honest, pleasant manliness. My tender years were guarded with a care that was never excelled, with a love that was never surpassed, and my good qualities of mind and heart, such as they were, were watched in their development with a pride that was almost extravagant in its excess. Hence, although I could not but feel the loneliness of my early years, I think, however, that no child could have felt it less, and I am sure that no father and mother were ever dearer to a child, or ever laboured more earnestly and more successfully to be all in all to the object of their love than did my honoured, revered, and cherished parents. But with Lionel it was different. His mother had died when he was but an infant. I do not mean to say that Sir Lionel did not love his child, or was not proud of the noble boy who was the last of his line, the sole representative of all its honours, and the natural inheritor of its almost boundless wealth. I am sure that he both loved his boy and was proud of him; but I am equally sure that it was with a love and a pride very different in their nature from those with which the brave and honest yeoman, my father, regarded me. Sir Lionel Ravenshale was not a man to whom the more tender affections and sympathies of the human heart seemed to be

familiar. Cold—stern—haughty—he was not a man to draw to himself the warm affections of a young and guileless nature; and one of my very earliest recollections, one of the earliest subjects of my childish wonder, was the evident fear and shrinking with which I remarked young Lionel seemed to regard his father on the few occasions on which I saw them together in those very early days. Later on, I knew and understood all this much more clearly, and, alas, but too well!

I shall have to speak plainly of Sir Lionel Ravenshale hereafter, and I may as well state at once that he was a problem which I never pretended to solve—a mystery which I never aspired to fathom. He was a Catholic, and the representative of a long line of illustrious ancestors, many of whom had bled and died for the sake of the blessed faith which he and they alike professed, and for which, I doubt not, that he too would have fought and bled if need had been. The chapel of Ravenshale had never been desecrated, and, although it possessed no treasure to be compared with that holy land which rested in its shrine at Farley Hall and brought a never-failing blessing upon the Farleys of Farley, still it was rich in holy relics too, and in memorials of the days gone by. Every day the morning sun shone fresh and fair upon the priest as he stood at the altar of Ravenshale and offered that pure oblation which cleanseth from all sin, and every morning Sir Lionel knelt before that altar and

bowed his head as lowly and as reverently as the humblest of them all, as the Word made Flesh came down once more and dwelt in truest, though in sacramental presence, among the worshippers who thronged that venerable sanctuary. At night, when the retainers assembled for their evening devotions, Sir Lionel was never absent, and the tones of his full clear voice were the most distinct in the responses to the prayers. When the glorious feast of Corpus Christi came round, and the beautiful procession, rich in banners and in costly robes, in sweetest incense and most fragrant flowers, wound its way through wooded dells and undulating lawns which had not their equal in all the country side, Sir Lionel ever went first, bearing aloft the processional cross, and those who watched him as he did so might well come to the conclusion that he deemed himself most highly honoured, and most specially favoured, in thus being allowed to go before and lead the way for Him who came, in fullest love, to bless the smiling earth, the budding flowers, the faithful kneeling few who knew Him and adored Him, as truly and as fondly now, in this His Sacramental Presence, as they hoped to do in the blessed days to come when the veils should be removed and they should see Him face to face, even as He is in the glory and the majesty of His everlasting kingdom.

But whilst Sir Lionel was thus exact in his attendance upon all the services of his church,

and whilst his purse was ever open to its calls, and his tongue ever ready in its defence, I am afraid that there was, deep down in his heart perhaps, enough of pride to destroy a dozen of souls, a pride all the more dangerous from its very subtlety, and from the very fact that he himself was scarcely conscious of its existence. God forbid that I should slander him, or needlessly draw aside the veil with which Christian charity ever seeks to cover and hide away from sight the faults which cannot be denied, and, perchance, scarcely palliated. But I am compelled to speak thus plainly of him, as, otherwise, I shall not be able to explain some traits of his character which have yet to be developed, or to give a reason for his mode of action in some painful circumstances yet to be unfolded, and which, without this explanation, would be simply inexplicable. Do I mean, then, to say that he was what is familiarly called a bad Catholic—a man going through certain external observances, but interiorly devoid of faith or charity; a whitened sepulchre—fair and pleasant to the sight—but, within, full of rottenness and corruption? I do not presume to pass any such judgment upon him. I only repeat what I have already said, that he was a problem which I never pretended to understand—a mystery which I never aspired to solve. It may have been that he was unconscious of its presence in his soul—it may have been that it had so grown with his growth until it had become such an intimate

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part of himself that he never thought of considering it in its own individual deformity, or apart from his own most intimate essence—but, account for it as you will, or explain it as you may, he was the victim of a pride and self esteem which was as arrogant as it was overbearing, as subtle as it was profound. I think it gave a colour to his very thoughts. I am certain that it influenced and governed all his actions. It showed itself in the coldness and distant reserve of his intercourse with his equals. It showed itself still more plainly and unpleasantly in the utter lording, in the domineering mastery, which he seemed to assume, as a right not to be disputed, over his inferiors. I am not certain that it did not even show itself where, most surely, it should have been absent, in his relations and his intercourse with the very priest of God who ministered at his altar, and who sat at his table—probably because he thought it becoming to have a priest to say grace for him just as he deemed it becoming to have a butler to stand behind his chair—but who was, I should scarcely dare to say, an *honoured* guest. In every relation of life he seemed to be the same cold, reserved, self-sufficient man; and if again you ask me how I reconcile this fact with the regular discharge of religious duties and observances, again I assure you that I am not able, and I do not pretend, to reconcile these things. There are mysteries in the spiritual life, in the relations between man and his fellow-man, still more between

man and his God, which are not easily to be solved. There are inconsistencies in the lives of some men which are all the more painful because they seem as if they can never be reconciled, although they regard interests of the most solemn import and of the most vital moment. And of all the veils which may darken the eyes of man, there is perchance none so dense, none so difficult to be rent asunder, none which brings such ruin to the soul, as that which is the result of a pride so subtle and so deep as had its root in the heart of Sir Lionel Ravenshale. And never, perchance, is a man so worthy of the deepest pity and earnest commiseration of his fellow-men; never does he stand in such need of God's most tender love, of God's most clear and piercing light, as when he is thus beaten about and domineered over by the demon of pride!

I know well enough that there will be plenty of men ready to make excuses for Sir Lionel. I know there will be plenty to maintain that it was but natural that he, the representative of such a noble and an honoured name—that he, so rich, so powerful, so infinitely raised above those amongst whom he dwelt, should be proud, and cold, and haughty. I admit it all. With sorrow I grant that all this was but too natural; but I grieve, in my inmost heart I grieve, that one so noble, one endowed with such choice gifts of nature, one called to such high and holy things, should so far have allowed himself to become the victim of that

which was but too natural, as to have forgotten or lost sight of that supernatural help which is given us that we may overcome that which is natural—I grieve, in my inmost heart I truly grieve, that he should so far have given himself up to the dominion of this cruel pride, which never stayed its bitter and relentless course until it had wrecked his brightest hopes, shattered his fairest idols, and cast him upon the world to come—the dreadful changeless evermore—a broken-hearted, childless, ruined man. I grieve for all this because there was a time when I admired him and loved him for his own sake. I grieve still more for the sake of his son who was dear to me as if he had been bound to me by the bonds of brotherly love and affection. I grieve most of all from the thought of all that should have been for him, and was not, because he was not faithful to the light that must surely have been in him, nor true to the instincts and the promptings which nature as well as grace must surely have poured upon his cold hard heart.

I have thus spoken of him, not harshly I trust, although perhaps plainly, in order that I might make you understand me more clearly when I repeat what I said a little while ago, viz.: that, whilst our intercourse was inestimably pleasant and useful to me, I have reason to believe that it was equally, or, still more so to Lionel, inasmuch as he stood still more in need of such help than I did. I have also spoken of him in this manner,

and thus dwelt upon what I deemed the salient points in his character, because in them is to be found the explanation of all the grievous misunderstandings which followed; and which, commencing with trifles not worth a second thought, went on growing, increasing, and culminating, until at least two, and nearly three, noble hearts had been sacrificed, ruthlessly and relentlessly, to that fell devil of empty, senseless, worthless pride which drove our first parents from the innocence and the happiness of Eden, and which has been blighting and destroying their hapless offspring ever since.

During the happy years of our college life we were nearly always together. When vacation came we travelled home together, and during those days of enjoyment, the "two young Squires" were seldom apart. Each succeeding vacation I was still more and more patronised by Mr. Perkins, who, by some process of reasoning peculiar to himself, placed all the credit of my increasing knowledge to his own account, boasting up and down the village, and especially in the bar of the Red Lion, that the young Squire of Farleye was becoming a powerful scholar, and that he had laid the foundation of it all; an assertion which Roger treated with an emphatic, not to say, contemptuous denial. "A puir ignorant old fule," as Roger used indignantly to exclaim, "that hardly knows his right hand fra' his left, and that we had to send about his business, 'cause he warn't even able to teach

t' young maister how to write. That Perkins is nowt but a puir, boasting, ignorant fule, and he'll never be nowt else." Each succeeding vacation Roger assumed more and more authority over me and whilst he taught me how to shoot and fish, began to favour me more and more plentifully with those bits of his mind and those tastes of his tongue to which I gradually became so well accustomed. Each succeeding vacation Lionel spent more and more of his time at Farleye Hall, which the honest heartiness of my father, and the womanly gentleness, the tender sympathy of my dear mother for the lonely boy, must have rendered so pleasant to him when compared with the desolate stateliness and the stiff chill formality of Ravenshale. Each succeeding vacation I was invited more and more frequently to Ravenshale by the baronet, who was always kind in his own way to me, and who certainly encouraged and looked with an eye of favour upon the friendship which existed between his son and myself. And each succeeding year, too, I saw more and more plainly the first faint indications of the storm which lowered and grew darker on the horizon. Almost impalpable, almost untangible as it was, I discerned, nevertheless, but too plainly, the ever growing incompatibility of disposition, of tastes, and of sympathies, between the baronet and his only son, which, when, founded in, and springing from, a nature such as his—a nature so stern, so unbending, so overbearing—is fraught with danger

of the deadliest kind to the happiness and peace of those who may be brought within its evil and its baneful influence.

But, with the priceless buoyancy of youth, I cast aside the shadowy and gloomy forebodings which I could not altogether hide from myself, and hoped and prayed for the best. And, thus, the blessed days of my happy and my innocent boyhood sped all too quickly away; and thus, almost even before I was aware of its presence, the spring time of my youth had melted into early summer, the first fair freshness of my life had slipped away beyond my grasp—my happiest days had gone to be numbered with the irrevocable past—and I stood—a man—face to face with the summer that with all its heats, its labours, its burthens, and its responsibilities, was full upon me—a man, determined with God's never-failing help to do his duty, honestly and truly, in the battle of life, to his Maker and to his fellow men.

BOOK SECOND.

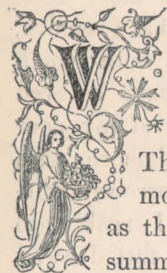
MID-DAY.

“ Vain glorious man, when fluttering wind does blow
In his light wings, is lifted up to skye,
The scorn of knighthood and trew Chevalrye ;
To thinke, without desert of gentle deed
And noble worth, to be advanced hye,
Such Praise is shame ; but Honour, Vertue's meed,
Doth bear the fayrest floure in honourable seed.”

“ Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

CHAPTER I.

AMONG THE AUTUMN LEAVES.



WITH a tender, nay, almost with a reverent hand, I enter upon the brief history of what I am to call the mid-day, or summer of my life. The autumn leaves are already falling more and more thickly about my feet, as the fair freshness of the spring, the summer suns, and the summer flowers, pass more and more quickly away from me, to be numbered with the irrevocable past. And it is with something of an effort—with something of a pitying and reluctant hand—that I gently and sadly brush those autumn leaves away, that yet once more I may speak of my summer days; of a summer that was all too brief; of a summer that passed away even still more quickly than the spring time of my life; of a summer, that, brief as it was, was darkened nevertheless with storms that swept relentlessly across the horizon, obscuring with their clouds and their gloom the few faint gleams of sunshine that fell upon my path, causing me for some little space almost to forget that this world was aught but a passage to the

next—almost to forget that the flowers which I plucked with such eagerness, and which seemed to me eternal in their beauty and their bloom, would fade away, and wither, and die, almost before I had them fairly within my grasp. Yes, it is with a pitying and a reverent hand that I brush those autumn leaves away, and, in the pale and silvery light of my harvest moon, look once more upon the past. It is with a pitying hand that I remove, even for some little space, the veil with which time and the tender love of God have covered and hidden from sight the wounds of my poor and sorrow-stricken heart. It is, still more, with a reverent touch that I unveil the sorrows of the past: that, briefly as it may be done, I speak once more of the fair young bride who flitted away from the earth that was not pure enough for her, almost ere she had ceased to be a bride, and who sleeps her long last sleep where the flowers are fairest and the sun shines brightest in the quiet grave-yard of Ravenshale church; that yet once more, although the tears may blind my eyes till I can scarcely see the words I strive to pen, I may force myself to speak of thee, my little crippled child, my one poor lamb, for many weary years the only solace of my lonely life; that yet once more I may lay, it may be before an un pitying and a criticising world, thy trials and thy sorrows, my brother, and my friend, that all who run may read, that all who read may learn the humble lesson which I strive to teach, to wit, that all our

sorrows come to us from the loving hand of God; that the man who is faithful and true to the end, although he may have to wade through a sea of sorrows ere he lay his hand upon it, shall surely grasp, when that blessed end has come, the crown that shall shine but all the brighter for the tears that may have dimmed its radiance, or hidden for a moment from his sight the brilliance and the beauty of its everlasting gems.

The days of my college life had passed away, and I stood upon the brink of my manhood with a mind strangely unsettled as to the course into which my future was to shape itself. As a rule, the Farleyes of Farleye had settled down upon the ancestral acres and made their cultivation at once the occupation of their lives and the source of their revenue. Although my father had no necessity to trouble himself about their cultivation from a pecuniary point of view, he too had, however, settled down upon the family acres and spent his life, happily and pleasantly, in superintending the numerous labourers to whom he gave employment. I think nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to have seen me settle down to the same quiet uneventful life. I dare say it had never entered into his calculations when he sent me to college, and gave me an education so much superior to that which he himself had received, that this very education might unfit me, or, at least, give me a disrelish for the life which he most desired to see me embrace. At all events,

so it was. Whilst I was strangely undecided as to the profession which I would embrace—not that there was an absolute need of my embracing any, I was quite determined not to settle down, at once and for ever, and devote myself to the cultivation of the family estate. I had pursued my studies with considerable ardour, and I had acquired a taste for intellectual pursuits which at once unfitted me and gave me a disinclination for the pastoral life which my dear father had led with so much happiness to himself, and so much profit to his humble neighbours. I could see that it was a great disappointment to him when I opened my mind on this subject and gave him to understand that I wished to embrace one or other of the learned professions, but he bore it with wonderful patience and gentleness. “I have been very happy,” was all that he said, “in looking after the old acres, and I could have wished that thy mind, my dear lad, had turned itself in the same direction. But, these things are not always in our own hands, nor according to our own wishes. Take thy own way, my lad, and, whatever that may be, God bless thee in it. Thou’rt my only one, and God forbid that I should force thee. I pray that thou may’st be a better, but thou can’st scarcely be a happier man than I have been.” He turned away his honest face as he spoke, but not so quickly that I did not see a tear or two rolling down his cheeks. He never pressed me on the subject again, but left

me to myself to follow my own course. Wayward, fitful, and full of trouble, that course turned out to be. How far I might bring these troubles on myself I may not say. How far I might be responsible for that waywardness and fickleness which caused me to lose, in empty undecision, some of the best and most precious years of my life, I may say still less. But, this, in all truth and in all sincerity I may say: that I have been neither a better nor a happier man than my father was.

For some time I hoped, as I believed, that I was called to the ecclesiastical state. I had a great desire to become a priest; but, in the end, God, in his wonderful goodness, opened my eyes and let me see very plainly that this high and holy vocation was not for such as me. It was a great trial—He only knows how great a trial it was to me—to have to relinquish this my cherished desire, but, in all my waywardness, I think I ever strove to do His holy will as far as my weakness allowed; and when once it was made clear to me that I was not called to the service of the altar, I gave it up, I will not say without a struggle, but, at least, with resignation and submission. I could not say without a struggle, since the truth is, that my health, which had never been very strong, gave way under the conflict of mind and heart through which I had passed, and after going through the retreat in which the will of God was made known to me, and in which I

made Him, as cheerfully as I could, the offering which had cost me more than I can or wish to say, I was very glad to get back again to Farleye, that I might lay my aching head upon my mother's breast—that I might rest a little while ere yet once more I looked my future in the face, and strove to make out the path which it was destined for my feet to tread.

Through many months of sickness I looked unceasingly for the path I never found. I marked the lines growing deeper on my father's face. I used to watch him riding on his pony up the avenue, and I could not but notice how much of the old heartiness of his gait and manner had departed from him. I used to miss the pleasant ring of his cheery voice, with which he had formerly been accustomed to enter the house on his return from his daily ride. It was infinitely painful to me to know that the cheerful voice was hushed—that the vigorous step was checked, lest the "poor lad" who lay sickly and fretful might be disturbed or put about. I could not but see how pale and thin my mother grew all at once. I could not but feel the tears which fell upon my brow as she bent over me to arrange my pillow. It was almost more than I could bear, as I lay sleepless and weary through the long long nights, to hear the door of my room softly open, and to see her steal gently and noiselessly to my side. I would sometimes close my eyes and pretend to be asleep, that she might not know how ill I was—

how utterly weary in body and in soul. It was more than I could bear, as she knelt by the side of my bed in the silent watches of the night, to listen to the smothered anguish of her voice, as she wailed and prayed, and, in the desperation of her mother's heart and love, wrestled and fought with God for the life of her only child. Many and many a time I was fain to let her know that I was wide awake and conscious of the priceless treasure of the love which was spent so lavishly upon me; fain to draw her to my side, that I might mingle my tears with hers; fain to join my voice with hers in prayer to God—not indeed that He might give me life, since for this I cared but little—but that His holy will might be accomplished to the full in me.

But, all this passed away in its own good time, and when the summer sun had come to shine once more upon the world, I was up again and going about much as before. However, it was decreed that I must travel, and, after much preparation and many family councils, I started, accompanied by Roger, for the south of Europe, where I was to spend a year or two. For some two years I travelled about from place to place without much caring where I went, but with considerable advantage to my bodily health and strength. I was just beginning to think seriously about returning home, and of applying myself to some settled literary pursuit, or of entering some profession, and, in fact, had got as far as Florence on

my way, when I received an urgent letter to return at once as my father was very ill. Traveling was rather slow in those days, but we journeyed on night and day with the utmost despatch. I arrived at Farleye in time to comfort him by my presence, as I myself was consoled beyond description by the simple faith which lighted up these his last days, and by the strong unwavering hope with which he looked forward to the better things so near at hand. It was my privilege to receive his last sigh, my privilege to close his eyes when all was over, my privilege to take the last look at the face which was as beautiful in the placid stillness of death as it had been beautiful in the noble manliness of his life. It was my privilege to lay him in the old family burial place; and it is my consolation to believe and know, that of all the Farleyes who went before him, there was not one more worthy of the name, not one whose life was a nobler carrying out of the motto which surrounds our crest—"Faithful and True." A little while, a very little while, and my dear mother followed him whose faithful partner she had been for many peaceful happy years, in all their hopes, their sorrows, and their joys. The light of her life went out with his. It never shone again, but, after a few faint flickerings, sank peacefully to its everlasting rest.

Again I left the old place and wandered hither and thither, still wavering, still undecided, still ill at ease. When I returned once more to Farleye,

a fair young bride was by my side, and the whole world was full of sunshine and of flowers. In the presumption of my foolish heart I thought that there could be no measure to my happiness. My foot was so light that I could scarcely tread the earth. I seemed to soar above the world with its sorrows and its cares, and for a few short months I do believe that I was as happy as it is ever given mortal man to be. Poor fool that I was! At the very moment when my heart was lightest and my hopes were brightest, when the cup of my happiness seemed full even to the very brim, the pitiless storm came crashing down upon me, and left me stranded, ruined, broken-hearted, in the very prime of my life, in the very flower of my days. I tried to bow my weary head before the blessed will of God. I tried my best, my very best, to bare my quivering heart that I might lay it, pure and simple, on the altar of His love. I strove my utmost that I might humbly kiss the hand which had stricken me almost beyond the powers of my endurance, but, which, I knew, had stricken me in fullest mercy and in truest love. It was hard for me to part so soon with the treasure of my heart and love; but, after all, what were my claims in comparison with those of God? What right had I to complain when it pleased Him, in the infinite wisdom of His eternal love, to take her to Himself that she might rest for evermore upon the bosom of her God, that she might shine for evermore in the light and

beauty of His sacred presence? It was hard—oh! how hard, how fearfully hard it was, but I strove my best to think only of *her* gain, and nothing of *my* loss; and, so, I bared my heart to the stroke that came to me from God, I bent my head as patiently and as reverently as I might to the blast which seemed to blow so pitilessly and so cruelly upon me; and though it might be long before my lips could form the words, I ever strove, even when my sorrow was the deepest and my grief most bitter and unreasoning, to say in my heart of hearts, “Thy will be done, my God, Thy blessed will be done.”

But, let it pass. I could not, even if I wished to do so, speak much of these things now. It was with a pitying and a reverent hand that I raised, even for one brief moment, the veil which mercifully hides and covers the past. It was necessary for me to do so, otherwise I could not have made you understand how it was that, after all, I came to settle down at Farleye Hall, with nought remaining to me out of the wreck of the past but my one poor lamb, my little crippled child. I could not otherwise have made you understand how it was that I came by degrees to look upon submission to the will of God, and the accomplishing of the good that fell within my reach, sufficient occupation for a life, at all events for such a life as seemed henceforth marked out for me.

I have now sufficiently explained the motive

which alone influenced me, as I think it could alone have justified me in reverting, briefly as I have done so, to the trials of my early life. With the same tender and reverent hand, with which for one brief moment I raised it up, I drop once more, upon the sad and sorrowful past, the veil which is never, never, to be raised again.

CHAPTER II.

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET.

WHILST my life had been thus slipping away from me, the few days of sunshine which fell to my share intermingled with clouds and overcast with many sorrows and cares, sorrows and cares had fallen heavily upon Lionel Ravenshale too, much more heavily than upon myself. There was this difference, however, between us: that my trials had come to me from the hand of God, whilst his had come to him, if we may thus speak of any of the trials of this life, from the hand of man—from the hand which of all others should have ever been raised aloft to remove even the first faint glimmerings of trouble or adversity from his path. Yet so it is, alas, but too often! How often does it not fall out in the battle of life that the heaviest blows which are rained upon us—the blows which are most bitter from the cruel and relentless precision with which they are aimed—the blows which sink deepest into the quivering soul, come to us from the hand which is nearest, as it ought to be dearest, to us. People talk much now-a-days about skeletons in the closet, and I daresay the talk is true enough. I only wish that

the skeleton did not so often leave the mark of his hideous hand upon scarified and living hearts. I only wish that love was truer, deeper, more generous and confiding. I only wish that pride was less exacting, less prone to hasty judgments, less ready to take offence where offence was never meant, less slow to pardon injuries which have no existence outside the unreasoning mind which fosters and cherishes them to its own destruction, and we should have fewer skeletons in the closet—fewer blighted lives—fewer crushed and broken hearts.

Even before I went abroad to recover my health after the sickness to which I alluded in the last chapter, I had more than once been called in to make peace between Sir Lionel Ravenshale and his son. I hardly know how the misunderstandings between them first commenced, or in what grievances, real or fancied, they had their foundation. I only know that Lionel had scarcely left college ere that want of perfect sympathy between himself and his father which I had noticed, even as a boy, began to show itself more and more plainly. They seemed, moreover, to have a facility of misunderstanding each other about the most trivial matters, which, under the circumstances, was almost certain to lead to deplorable results. The baronet demanded an absolute submission to his will, his wishes, and his caprices, which was as exacting as it was unreasonable; whilst the high spirit of his son chafed under

the petty restraints which were put upon him, and the annoyances to which he was subjected, with an impatience which grew every day stronger and stronger, more and more difficult to be restrained, more and more likely to burst into open rebellion.

It was one of the inconsistencies of his character which I could never fathom; how a man of such high principles and such natural dignity; how a man with notions of his own position, and of what was due to his rank and station, which were exaggerated even to excess, should have been so essentially *narrow* in his dealings and relations with his only son. I am sure there was never a better son than Lionel, nor one more ready to honour his father with fullest honour, and love him with truest love. But, whilst I say this, I must also add that there was no one more ready to realize and to insist upon what was due to his own position. He was, to my thinking, and the more I ponder on it the more deeply I am convinced of the truth of what I assert, a youth of singular purity of mind and justness of view. I do not believe that he ever over-rated those accidents of birth, of wealth, and position, which had fallen to his share; but, at the same time, I do not think that he under-rated them, even in the slightest degree. I think he appreciated, perhaps to the very full, all that was due to him as the only son and heir of Sir Lionel Ravenshale, and due to him even from his father. And hence it came to pass, that, when, as a young man, he

found himself surrounded by those same restraints which had been placed upon him as a boy; when he found that he could not take a horse from the stables, nor spend a day from home without his father's permission; when he found himself pinched for money, and he was never extravagant in his tastes nor lavish in his expenditure; when he found that he was expected to submit all his own arrangements and desires to the will and caprice of his father; his naturally proud spirit chafed, as I have just said, under the unreasonable restraints which were put upon him, and more than once blazed up into open rebellion.

It was very painful to me to witness the gradual development of that coldness and restraint between the baronet and his son which grew out of this unnatural and unreasonable state of things. And it was all the more painful, because, whilst I could not but admit in my inmost heart that my friend was unjustly and badly treated, I knew full well that the baronet was not likely to change his mode of acting, and I could not but foresee the troubles and calamities which were but too certain to arise. I was present more than once at one of those quarrels which I am afraid were but too frequent between them. The baronet never got angry in the same way as common people do: he never raised his voice, nor threatened, nor bullied, as is the wont of commoner folk. You could only tell when he was more moved than usual by the ghastly pallor which seemed to creep like a living

thing across his handsome face, marring all its beauty and its grace, and proclaiming as it were in characters of living flame the presence of the foul demon who was reigning in his heart. At such moments, there was a contraction of his brow, and a glare in his eye, which were most painful to behold, whilst there was a cold and biting irony in the stinging words which he hissed forth rather than spoke, that was certain to excite the angry opposition of him at whom they were directed, if they failed to strike him with terror and dismay. They struck me, I frankly confess, with terror and fear, but I never saw them produce the same effect on Lionel.

I was present on one evening, and I remember it well, when some misunderstanding more grave than usual had arisen between them. I strove to act the part of the peacemaker, but my efforts were all in vain. The baronet was in the wrong, palpably and grievously in the wrong; but he resented my well-meant interference so quickly and so harshly that I was fain to hold my tongue. I looked on, trembling, at a scene which to me was so unusual and so infinitely painful. The patience and the self-command of my friend were wonderful in such trying circumstances, and my love and my admiration for him were increased, if that had been possible, a thousand fold by his noble forbearance and his generous self-restraint. As the dispute waxed warmer, the baronet, who had been pacing hastily up and down the room,

suddenly stopped short and stood face to face with his son. As I write, the scene with all its painful details is as vividly present to my eyes as if it had but happened yesterday. I see the baronet—haughty, stern, and pitiless; with the ghastly pallor creeping visibly in its horrible distinctness across his countenance, blanching his face even to the very roots of his hair, till you might mistake that face, save for the eyes which glow like living fires, for the face of a corpse. As the cruel words which seem steeped in the very bitterness of gall issue from his father's lips, I see my friend standing there in the noble dignity of his generous self-restraint, the blood rushing impetuously across his face, his head thrown proudly back, and a slight curl, of which perhaps he is unconscious, upon his finely chiseled lip, which adds a wondrous expression of calm defiant self-possession to his bearing. Thus he stands for some few seconds, keeping down by a mighty effort the impetuous words which rush to his lips; fighting like a noble-hearted gentleman with that biting sense of his wrongs, and of the injustice of his treatment, which is writing itself more and more deeply on his heart—struggling more and more fiercely to find expression in words. Once, I think he is about to answer, as the hot blood mantles more and more indignantly on his brow, and quivers through his frame even to his finger's ends; but he struggles still more strongly with himself, and, passing his hand wearily and painfully

over his face, turns his back upon the ghastly cruel countenance and walks hurriedly away. As he steps through the open window on to the lawn outside I hastily follow him. As he hears my step upon the gravel walk he turns quickly round, and when he sees who it is that follows him waits till I come up with him. Without a word he puts his hand in mine and leads me to a quiet place where none can see us. Then, when we are hidden from the prying eyes of men, and when no eye may see us but the pitying eye of God; all at once the forced restraint gives way—all at once, the manly, generous, noble, struggling heart, breaks down. As he lays his head upon my shoulder the fountains of his soul are broken up. The tears which, copious as they are, bring no shame upon his manhood, rain down upon the ground below our feet; and with great choking sobs, such as are never wrung except from the heart of a true and noble man, he cries and weeps for some short space as only men can weep, weeps in the bitterness of his sorrowing soul, weeps as those weep who refuse to be comforted.

Talk about skeletons in the closet, indeed!—Let us rather talk of devils living rampant in the hearts of men who make pretence of Christian faith and Christian practice, and our talk, forsooth, may be nearer to the mark!

And, thus, this miserable tale of senseless pride—of unreasoning folly—of groundless misunder-

standing, increased and grew stronger day by day. It was hard enough for me to counsel patience, self-restraint, and generous forbearance to my friend, when I knew so well that all the right was on his side, all the injustice on the other; but I laboured to the very best of my ability to soothe and comfort him under his heavy trials—to cheer him with the hopes of happier and better times; and it was my privilege more than once, as I have already said, to make peace between them, and to bring about a reconciliation when the breach had grown so wide as to seem almost irreparable.

Such was the unsatisfactory state of affairs at Ravenshale when I was ordered by my physician to travel. Lionel had been much with me during my sickness and had done his best to cheer and brighten me up. Sick as I was, and disinclined to think much, or take much notice of what went on about me, I had nevertheless observed with pain an ever-growing seriousness and gravity in my friend. There were many times, as he sat by my side, that I could see his thoughts were far away. I marked the first faint indications of the lines which care is wont to draw across the brow, no matter how fair or how beautiful it may be. I scarcely ever heard the cheery laugh which had been so pleasant to me in the days gone by. I missed the happy smile which I had been so used to see playing about his mouth, and which his gravest misunderstandings with his father had seldom been able to banish for more than a day or two. Now

I scarcely or never saw it. Altogether, I came to the conclusion that there was something wrong: something, I mean, in addition to that ever-standing, never-dying wrong, between his father and himself. I pressed him closely, and with all the earnestness which our long friendship and our never-wavering love warranted me in using, to tell me what it was, to unburthen the secret care which I saw was preying on his mind to me—his oldest and his truest friend. For a long time he parried my enquiries and strove to ward them off. For a moment he would put on a gaiety which I saw was only assumed, and which was far too shallow to escape the keen eye of my observant love. Still, as he seemed unwilling to confide in me to the full, although I felt hurt at what appeared his want of confidence, I could not, and did not, attempt to press him further upon the matter.

It was only the evening before I started on the travels which might be of such indefinite duration that he fully unburthened himself to me. It was early summer, and we were sitting alone together, speaking but little, and that little not of a very cheerful nature. My sickness had left me delicate and nervous, and, although I shrank from admitting it even to myself, I was about to leave home and all that was nearest and dearest to me in this world, more than half convinced that I should never return except to be laid in the vault where so many of the Farleyes, of whom I was

then the last, slept their long last sleep. His thoughts were probably no less melancholy than my own. At all events, he sat by my side, hardly speaking a word, until the brief evening of the summer day had nearly faded out; and it was not until the twilight had grown so thick that I could scarcely see his face, that he drew nearer to my side, and in broken hesitating words, unfolded to me the new care which had taken possession of his heart and soul. It was one which struck me dumb with astonishment; one which I was utterly unprepared to hear; one which I perceived at a glance was destined to increase his trials a hundred thousand fold; one which, in all human probability, would cause the tempests to sweep across the troubled ocean of his life with a force and an angry strength in comparison with which all that he had hitherto suffered would seem but as the gentle babbling of the summer waves breaking in placid quiet—in scarcely spoken music—on the sounding shore; one which I contemplated with all the more affright because the same glance which revealed its terrible results and consequences to me, revealed to me my own utter impotence to change the course of events, or to ward off even one iota of those consequences from my friend.

I shall strive to make a long story short. In one word, he informed me that he had already plighted his troth to one who was somewhat below himself in social position; to one who had neither

wealth nor high connections to recommend her to Sir Lionel; nothing but the beauty, the purity, and the thousand-and-one good qualities upon which my friend dilated with such genuine and such natural eloquence, but, which I knew full well Sir Lionel would behold with far different eyes; to one who, to crown all, did not profess the same faith as himself, who did not pray as he prayed, nor kneel at the same altar as that before which he worshipped.

All this came out from him in many broken words, with many pressures of my hand, with many mute appeals to that sympathy which, God knows, was his in all the fulness of my heart and love. But when I say that I was struck dumb with astonishment and dismay as I listened to his tale, I little express the emotions which oppressed me beyond the power of speech. I saw so vividly and so plainly all that must too surely follow from such an engagement—the utter rage with which Sir Lionel would look upon a match so destructive of his long cherished plans for the aggrandisement and advancement of his family—the long long years perchance of suffering and of poverty which might fall upon my friend—that I was powerless to express in words the sympathy which I felt for him, and was fain to content myself with an earnest pressure of his hand, as we sat, silent and sorrowful, in the growing darkness of the summer twilight.

Nor did I overlook those still more serious

and more dreadful consequences, for time and for eternity, which might follow from such an engagement as that into which my friend had entered. In the merciful goodness of God it did not so fall out in his case. But, if a man wish to take the most effectual means of wrecking his happiness for this world and for the next—of bringing down upon himself ruin as unutterable as it is irreparable, let him by all means contract one of those unhappy marriages which the church only permits when she cannot prevent, but over which she never pronounces the consecrating words of her sanctifying benediction. Yes, by all means, let him despise and set at nought the warning voice of the church that received him at his birth and washed him in the baptismal waters which made him a child of God; the church which has fed and nourished him with her holy sacraments and her never-failing graces; which has led him on step by step in the service of God; which has watched and guarded and tended him with more than a mother's love, till, now, in the empty strength—the groundless confidence of his early manhood, he takes upon himself to slight her counsels, to trample upon her admonitions, to prefer inclination to duty—the promptings of nature to the inspirations of grace. By all means, let him shut his ears to the voice of those who plead with him, it may be with all the force of a mother's love, or of a father's strong entreaty with a child. By all means, let him close his eyes

to the facts which he cannot help but see. Let him do all this, and ten times more, if it must be so; but, when the evil day has come and the unblessed marriage has brought forth its unblessed fruit; when misery, and distrust, and that lack of confidence which must exist between those who are thus matched, reign supreme around his hearth; when children are born to him who refuse to pray as he prays, children for whose souls he must answer before the judgment seat of the eternal God, let him not pretend that he did not know what he was about; let him not pretend to ignore that logic of facts of which men talk so much now-a-days; but, if that logic of facts comes to him in the shape of immortal souls for whom he is responsible exposed to perils too dreadful to be thought about, let him nerve himself to look those facts in the face as best he may. Let him try to square his accounts with God as best he can. Let him cast about and see what excuses his ingenuity may be able to invent when he shall stand face to face with the truth of God; but, as he is a man, let him not pretend to forget that the path he walks is one of his own selecting, and one which he selected in spite of the warning voice of God, speaking to him through the ministry of his church; a path which he has found encompassed with many thorns and many briars; a path which has led him to little happiness in this world, and, which, in all probability, is not leading him to happiness in the next; a path for

which, with all its consequences for time and for eternity, he may thank himself and himself alone.

And, now, I fancy I hear some one saying that all this is very narrow-minded and very bigoted. Be it so. When the teachings of religion are in question, and when religion and common sense go hand-in-hand, as they ever do, I freely confess that I am a bigot of the deepest dye, and so far from being ashamed of the name, I glory *in* and am proud of it. But come, my friend, you who, led away by passion, by inclination, or by interest, are about, in spite of the opposition of the church and the earnest remonstrances of your best and dearest friends, to unite yourself to one who differs from you on the most essential of all essential points, let us argue this matter coolly. We will not speak at present of the slight chances of happiness which await your union, nor of the misery which is too certain to arise when two people between whom there can be no mutual confidence, but, on the contrary, between whom there can be nothing but mutual distrust and mutual disagreement on the most vital questions of religious belief, are linked together for better or worse, for weal or for woe, with that chain which death alone can sever. Neither will I make you responsible for the eternal salvation of the partner whom you have taken to yourself—a partner who will doubtless think herself bound to do all in her power to lead you to think as she thinks, and to pray as she prays. I only hope she may not succeed in

her designs. Such designs have succeeded ere now, but I will not suppose it possible in your case. I will rather take the more hopeful view of your position. But, I take it for granted that you are a true believer in the faith which you profess—a faith which you necessarily hold to be the only true one, without which it is impossible to please God; outside of which you maintain that there is no salvation. If you do not hold these opinions I have no more to say to you. But, if you do hold them, then, I put my case to you, and I ask you a very simple question to which I beg of you to give me a simple and straightforward answer. Before the church *permits* you to enter into that solemn contract, upon which she finds you so obstinately and rashly bent—a contract, mind you, which at the best she only *permits* but never sanctifies with her benediction, she reminds you of that solemn obligation which religion and nature alike impose upon you, the obligation of rearing those children whom God may give you in the one true faith, and it is only on your solemn promise to fulfil this obligation that she even permits you to take the rash and foolish step. And, now, tell me simply and truly, like an honest man, whether you expect to be able to fulfil this solemn promise. I take it for granted that your wife will be an honest, conscientious woman, and that she will be just as firm, and, if you will, just as bigoted in her religious belief as you are in your own; I take it for granted that

she will be just as much convinced of the truth of the creed which she professes, as you are certain of its falsity; and if, as is but too likely, she should succeed in leading half your children to her way of thinking; nay, if she should succeed in leading but even one of them away from that faith which you necessarily and absolutely hold to be the only true one, tell me, I pray you, how you intend to face your God who gave you this child that you might rear it in his love and service? Are you responsible for the soul of that poor child, that child who but for you might have been an angel before the throne of God, or are you not? If you are responsible, and well you know the measure and the extent of your responsibility, then again I ask you to tell me what answer you are going to make to your eternal Judge on that day, when the strength and the delusion of human passion shall have been swept away, and when, standing face to face with infinite truth, you will be called upon to render an account for the blood which even then, perchance, is already crying out to God for vengeance on you—the blood of a child crying to God for swift uncompromising vengeance upon the very author of its existence? My poor, poor friend, who now, in the strength of your early manhood, in the darkness of your delusions, in the fulness of your so called liberality, are so bent upon having your own way in spite of church, of parents, or of friends; I trust that you are also prepared with an answer to

the simple question which, in truest love, in most earnest solicitude, I have ventured thus to put before you. If you are not, most assuredly I do not envy you the reflections which will harass you on your dying bed—which will dog your fainting steps through the dark valley of the shadow of death—which will never leave you till, in the mouth of your accuser, they confront you at the judgment seat of God.

But, perhaps, we are pushing these unpleasant reflections too far. I will only say that I am inclined to think that if many of the judgments and the views of God were to be weighed in human measures, and more especially in the liberal measures of these our times, they would be found very narrow-minded and very bigoted. I will add, that if I must needs make my election between the two, I had much rather be a bigot than a fool.

CHAPTER III.

“LET HIM REMEMBER THAT I AM HIS SON.”

AFTER my friend had unfolded to me the story of which I gave you the substance in the last chapter, I sat for a long time, silent, sad, oppressed with gloomy thoughts, utterly unable to put those thoughts into words, utterly powerless to argue this serious and most momentous matter with him. When at length I found words with which to express the feelings which were welling up so hotly from the very bottom of my heart in the intensity of my anxious love and solicitude for him—my friend, so highly prized, so truly loved—I strove my best, my very very best, to argue this matter with him—to put it before him in every possible point of view—to prevail upon him to give up what I could not but consider this most unfortunate engagement if it had not already gone too far. But, of what use is argument in such a matter as this? He listened to me patiently as I strove to reason with him. He responded to my solicitude for his welfare with a fulness of grateful affection which compelled me, spite of my own cooler reason, to lose sight of his imprudence. When I spoke to him of the wealth which he

might and ought to look for in his bride he answered me, and I was forced to admit truly enough, that affection and purity were of more value than mere silver and gold, and that the Lord of Ravenshale was rich enough to be able to dispense with these latter in his wife. When I endeavoured to put before him, as strongly as ever I was able, the bitter disappointment of his father, and the fierce resentment with which he would regard this ill-omened match, my friend grew pale indeed, and his voice quivered a little more than before, as he strove to meet my arguments, but he never flinched from his position, nor gave in to my reasoning. On the contrary, the more I spoke of Sir Lionel and his certain indignation, the more plainly did I perceive that this was the very last argument which was likely to have much weight with my friend. I dare say he could not, and, perhaps, did not endeavour to forget how little his father had done to make him happy; how little Sir Lionel had considered his inclinations, or consulted his tastes; and, hence, how little he was bound in turn to sacrifice what, rightly or wrongly, he considered as the happiness of his life, to the caprice of his father. At all events, as I went on with hot and eager words, I saw the look of fixed, almost stern, determination settling deeper and deeper on his noble face. The lines on his brow came out more markedly than I had ever seen them before, and his mouth assumed an expression, which, whenever I notice

it in faces such as his, warns me that further argument is but thrown away. It was only when I entered on the religious aspect of the matter that he really and truly reasoned with me.

“You see, Arthur,” he said to me, the honest manly tones of his voice trembling with emotion, “you see that my affection was given—my honor was pledged—almost before I thought of this matter of religion at all. I dare say I have been foolish so far; but, mind you,” he added quickly, his fine sense of honour and of what was due to her whom he had chosen for his bride showing itself in the very tones of his voice, “mind you, I am not regretting what I have done. I pray, and I believe, that she who one day is to be my wife, will also one day, in God’s good time, come to think as I think. It is possible that I might, if I had thought sooner of this, have succeeded in crushing the first whisperings of that affection which has now taken far too deep a hold of my heart ever to be rooted out. I say it is possible, but, I say at the same time, that I do not think I should have succeeded. I am pretty certain that I should not have endeavoured to do so. If I did not believe in my heart of hearts that she was worthy of my love, worthy of the position to which it will one day be my privilege to raise her, (poor fellow! that day never came) I would tear every vestige of my faithful honest love out of my breast, although I should die in the effort. But, for the rest, I can only hope and pray for the

best. I daresay my father will object to this match," he went on, his voice assuming for the first time, probably unconsciously to himself, a tone of bitterness and defiance, "but I cannot help that. If he choose to be unreasonable I shall not therefore elect to be dishonorable. I will go as far as it is in my power as an honest man to go to meet his wishes and his views. If he does not think fit to receive my wife, I shall not strive to force her upon him. If he is more unreasonable still, and will not allow us enough out of the family estates to live upon, I must only strive to labour for our support as best I may. But," he added more bitterly still, "you know it yourself, Arthur, no one knows it better than you, he has never shown so much solicitude for me or for my happiness, that I should sacrifice that happiness at the altar of his pride. He has never done much to cheer that life which, God knows, has been lonely and miserable enough, and if he expect me to trample upon the first glimpse of sunshine which has fallen across my path I can only tell him that he is terribly mistaken. With the help of God I will never fail in my duty as a son to him; but, let him not fail in his duty as a father to me. Let him remember," he went on, his voice growing more defiant in its tones, and the expression of determination on his face becoming deeper and more stern its character, "let him remember that I am his son and not his slave. It might have been better for him and for me if he

had remembered this a little oftener than he has done. Let him not tax me beyond the power of my endurance, or, he may find, that there is only too much of the Ravenshale spirit in me after all. Let him remember this ere it be too late. Let him, above all things, remember that I shall not sacrifice my only chance of happiness to his caprices, as I certainly shall not become a villain in obedience to the dictates of his unreasoning pride."

My poor Lionel! My honest, manly, noble-hearted friend! What could I say to him? How could I reason with him? How could I sit down and in cold blood argue this matter with him? In what words was I to ask him to trample upon what, rightly or wrongly, he believed to be the first ray of sunshine and happiness which had fallen upon the dreary path of his early manhood? With what overwhelming arguments was I to induce him to rend asunder the new ties which, perchance, he had been very foolish in assuming, but, which, now that they were formed, he could not break without becoming a villain and a scoundrel. A stronger and a wiser man than I might perhaps have done all this. But, for me, I was fain to confess that I was unequal to the task, and I could only pray that the greatness of my love for him might cover the weakness of my reasoning and the indecision of my action. As the perils of the voyage upon which he had embarked came rushing vividly through my mind, I

thought to myself, if I had only known all this a little sooner, how much I might have done; and what a different course events might, perhaps, have taken; but, now, it was all too late. I could not but feel that the time for interference had passed away. There was nothing left to me but to watch how these affairs, so perilous to him, so interesting to me for his dear sake, might shape and form themselves in the days so close at hand; nothing left to me but to watch with untiring eye that if, perchance, the storm which loomed in such threatening blackness in the distance should break upon his devoted head, I might be ready to throw around him the sheltering mantle of my deepest sympathy, my truest love.

At last he rose to go away. I took his hands in mine and strove to say the parting words which were trembling on my lips, but which those trembling lips could scarcely form. "God bless you, Lionel, till we meet again. God bless and have you in his holy keeping," was all that I could say. "God keep his holy hand upon you, and bring you safely through the perils which beset your path. My friend, my friend; my true, my faithful, and my only friend!"

He threw his arms around me and drew me to his breast. "O Arthur, what shall I do when you have gone," he cried, "or where shall I look for faithful counsel such as yours. But, Arthur, promise me," he went on as his tears fell upon my face, "promise me ere you go, that nothing which

may happen shall make any difference between you and me at least. O promise me this—promise me this, and I will let you go, for then I shall have something to hold me up till you come back to me! Promise me this, for it is all I ask of you!”

I could not speak it out in words, but I think I made him understand, more deeply than any words could have done, how fully and how truly I promised what he asked of me. I have said that my sickness had left me very weak and nervous, and that I was leaving home oppressed with many gloomy fears and sorrowful forebodings. As I drew him to my breast for one brief instant ere I let him go, thinking all the while how I might never look upon his pleasant honest face again, God only knows how all my heart went out to him in deep and true and earnest manly love.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE DARK WATERS.

I HAD only been a very short time away from home when I received a letter from Lionel, informing me that he had taken the decisive step, and that the rupture between himself and the baronet was complete. I shall, perhaps, best recount the manner in which these matters came to pass in his own words.

“MY DEAR ARTHUR,

“Knowing well of old how deep and true an interest you feel in me and my welfare, I hasten to inform you that I have at last taken what is, in all probability, the most important step of my life. Although I can scarcely venture to hope that this step will meet with your approbation, still, I am quite certain that you will be no less anxious to hear all about it, more especially as it has been accompanied with circumstances of a graver and more serious nature than, I think, either you or I anticipated.

“Very shortly after your departure I made up my mind to inform my father of my engagement, and to beg his permission to fulfil it. I was quite prepared to meet with much opposition from him,

and I was equally prepared, whilst making all due submission to his wishes, to insist respectfully but firmly upon my own rights. I may say to you, my dear Arthur, what I would say to no one else: I can speak to you with a freedom which I should not think of employing if any other person were in question: and I confess to you—in sorrow and in shame I confess it—that my father's conduct towards me when I simply, respectfully, and firmly laid this matter before him, was violent to the last degree.

“I have been accustomed, as you know, to bear much from him. I think I may say for myself that I have been more patient under much harsh treatment than many sons in my position would have been. I have made much allowance for his peculiar disposition, and, stifling the sting of my sufferings in the recollection that he was my father, I have struggled and fought with myself that I might bear his hard words, and his harder deeds, in silence, when my whole nature has been quivering with the sense of my wrongs, and striving to find expression in the angry words which have been trembling on my lips. How fierce the struggle has been—with what an effort I have mastered myself—how dearly I have purchased the victory over myself on many and many a weary time, my Maker only knows. It was for His dear sake that I struggled. It is to Him that I look for my reward.

“But, Arthur, there are limits to human endur-

ance. There is a point beyond which poor nature will not bear to be driven, beyond which it will not bear the lash without turning again in angry rebellion. I have to confess—it is in sorrow more than in anger that I do so—that he tried me beyond my uttermost powers of endurance, that he goaded me till I could bear it no longer.

“I cannot tell this sad story to the full, even to you, dear Arthur. I cannot pen the injurious words with which he demanded that I should break off, at once and for ever, what he called this disgraceful connection. Let it suffice to say, that I bore the torrent of his wrath, if not patiently, at least in silence, until on my refusal to comply with his unreasonable demands he proceeded to heap foul abuse upon her whom I had already chosen to be my wife. He dared to apply epithets to her in my hearing to which no man of honour could listen in silence. As long as he chose to pour his wrath upon me, bitter as the struggle was, I overcame myself and bore it in silence; but, when he so far forgot himself as to apply foul names to her, he had reached the limit beyond which I could not, and I would not endure.

“No! I would not bear this, even from him. My whole being, my whole soul, rose in revolt. I think he had forgotten that his own blood was in my veins. I think he had forgotten that the blood of the Ravenshalles, which is so hot even in an old man’s veins, boils almost to madness in a

younger frame; and for a moment he stood appalled at the storm which he had awakened.

“I am afraid I was very wicked; but, Arthur, I wasn’t my own master, indeed I wasn’t. He tried me beyond what I could bear. I struggled to restrain myself, even whilst he uttered the foul words which seemed to blister my very heart, they were so horrible and so unnatural. But, it was no use. I threw myself into a chair, and clenched my hands, and struggled and fought with myself. I felt the cold sweat rolling in big drops along my face, and still I did not give way. I felt the very blood boiling within my veins, and I felt, too, that I must die if the struggle continued much longer. I thought I would rather die than forget what was due to him; but what could I do? Arthur, he *would* not desist, he *would* not give me a chance of sparing him, and, still more, of sparing myself. He drove me to desperation, and, when I was no longer master of myself, I turned upon him. I could feel that ghastly pallor creeping across my very face. I have seen it on his face more than once; and I know what a fearful sight it is. I think it never left its hellish stamp on me before; and, O Arthur, I pray—how fervently I pray—that it may never, never blight my face with its cursed marks again. But, I felt it then—felt it as if it were a living thing—and, so, whilst I was the image of himself, reflecting back upon himself all his own pride, his own ungovernable rage, his own unreasoning rampant domineering

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will, I turned upon him, and for the first, as I hope for the last time in my life, I stood before him his equal—his master—in pride and angry rage.

“As I poured forth the bitter words which rolled up from the depths of a heart that had been tried beyond endurance; as I told him, in hot and angry words, the weary story of my wrongs; as I made him understand that the worm he had so long trodden on had turned at last; as I made him feel that the slave was his master now; he was fairly cowed, and for a moment he did not speak. O Arthur, if he had only desisted then! But, another moment, and I thought he would have struck me. It was wrong in me, I know, to speak to him as I did, but *he* might have had some mercy on me. He, at least, might have looked with an eye of pity on the storm which he himself had stirred up within my angry soul. But, no! For a moment I trembled lest he should raise his hand against me; for had he done so, I could not have answered for myself. Perhaps he saw something in my face that made him think better of it; but, at all events, he drew back. He paused for a moment, but it was only to take fresh breath. Again he repeated his demands, and again I respectfully but firmly declined to comply with them. He threatened me with his curse if I dared to proceed in this matter; and, to bring this painful story to a close, I left his presence, Arthur, with that terrible

curse ringing in my ears; and the last words which I heard from my father's lips were his calling his Maker to witness that he would never look upon my face again.

"Truly, it is a sad, sad story, and one which I have never told to mortal man, Arthur, save to you. I think I have been more sinned against than sinning, but I fear that I am not without blame. I pray God to pardon me my share in this most melancholy affair. I don't know whether my father will ever forgive me the wrong which, real or imaginary, he thinks that I have done him. God only knows how truly, how sincerely, I pardon and strive to forget the real wrong which he has done me.

"I have never seen my father since that day. He left Ravenshale almost immediately after our interview, and I remained there but a short time longer. For the last few weeks my wife and I have been living in London, where I hope to be able to devise some means of earning our bread. I confess the future appears gloomy enough, but I am striving to look it in the face like a man; and, no matter what may happen, I shall at least be sustained by the consciousness that I took the only course which was open to me, unless I was prepared to throw my honour and my truth to the winds. My wife is already beginning to enquire about our religion. Pray for her, Arthur, that she may have light to see the truth, and grace and strength to embrace it. She is so pure and so

good that I feel certain God will not long permit her to remain in error. If she were only once a Catholic I think I could face the future, no matter how dark and gloomy it may be, without fear or misgiving.

"I am very anxious to hear from you. I hope you will be able to give me very favourable accounts of your increasing health and strength. Try to get strong, dear Arthur, for my sake. You don't know how much I desire to see you, or how deeply I need your prudent counsel and your brotherly encouragement and advice. That God may send you safely and happily home to us, is the constant prayer of

"Your faithful friend,

"LIONEL RAVENSHALLE."

Such was the account which he gave me of the rupture between his father and himself, and softened down and modified as it was, it was bad enough. The sequel to their quarrel was natural enough and gave me no surprise. I was quite prepared to hear of his marriage, and, although from a human point of view, it was about as luckless and hopeless a union as one could well imagine, I was not sure but, that, under the circumstances, it was the best thing for him. If his wife were only what I ventured to hope she was, naturally enough her influence for good over him would be very great; and, any way, considering how far matters had gone, the position in which he stood, and his determination not to yield

to his father's wishes, I firmly believed that whatever chance of happiness there was for him, and, in truth, it seemed small enough, lay in his marriage.

And, now, began the old old story, which I shall touch as lightly and as briefly as possible—which I could not tell at length even if I wished to do so. The story of human suffering and of human struggle—the story of the hard, stern, striving world on the one side, and of generous instincts, of noble sympathies, and of sensitive natures on the other. The story of proud hearts ground down to the very dust—of noble, earnest, pure, and truthful men, almost driven to curse the day on which they saw the light; the story of men turning their despairing faces to the wall and praying for the death which will not come to them. Yes, the old old story of sorrow, of suffering, and of pain, which is as old as the world itself; but which, year by year, and month by month, and day by day, is ever cropping up again, to be told in the same sad strain; with the same sad chorus of bruised and broken hearts to sing the refrain which, whilst it is as old as the world itself, is as new as the last man who was born upon the earth to learn that he, like all who have gone before and all who are to follow, is destined but to run a very little race; to fume away a few short passing years; to learn, and to have to confess when all is over and past and gone, that in very truth man born of a woman lives but for a short time and is filled with many miseries; that

he cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed; that the day shall quickly come when the waters shall depart out of the sea, and the emptied river shall be dried up; that before his days are full, he shall perish and his hands shall wither away; that he shall be blasted as a vine when its grapes are in the first flower, and as an olive tree that casteth its flower.

Ah me! for the old old story which has to be told in greater or lesser measure for every man who is born upon the earth, the story which has to be told in all the bitterness of its unvarnished plainness for the luckless Heir of Ravenshale.

How Sir Lionel bore the first brunt of his sorrow no man may say. All that they can say is, that when he returned to Ravenshale some three months after the marriage of his son, he did so, to all appearance, an older man by twenty years.

He had done fierce battle with himself, and he had gained what I daresay he considered a very great victory; but he bore the scars which he had received in the fight about with him wherever he went, and they were scars which were not to be concealed away or hidden from the prying eyes of men. He might order the picture of the handsome laughing boy to be torn down and thrust away into a lumber room. He might take his pen, and, with his own ruthless unfaltering hand, erase the name of his son from the family register. He might order the poor dumb brute which his

boy had been accustomed to ride to be shot, and his dogs to be given away to any peasant who would take them—and there was no lack of loving hearts in Ravenshallow to crave as a priceless treasure whatever had belonged to the young Squire. He might order his gun to be broken and the fishing rods to be burnt. He might root out, as if they were plague-stricken, from his mansion every book, every picture, every trifle which could speak to him of the son whom he had banished for evermore from his heart and love, the son who was as dead to him as if the earth had been already heaped upon the cold corpse. Aye! he might do all this and a thousand times more, and what had he done, or what had he gained, so long as the tale was written in every line of his face, in every quiver of his proud mouth, in the sudden blanching of his hair, in the premature bending of his noble figure; written so plainly that any man who looked upon him might easily guess what his victory had cost him, might readily calculate the price that he had paid for it; might, without rashness or presumption, come to the conclusion, that, spite of his coldness and his pride, spite of the indomitable will which bore him through it all, spite of the unflinching determination which might break but never bend, the baronet was by far a deeper and more hopeless sufferer than the son whom he had conquered at such a weary cost.

He never relented—never gave way. I could

understand and make excuses for the annoyance which he naturally felt at having his plans frustrated, and his designs for the aggrandisement of his family overthrown, by the marriage of his son with a person of no wealth, and of somewhat inferior birth. But, although scarcely so highly born as himself, his son's wife was nevertheless a lady in every sense of the word, highly educated, with all the instincts and manners of a true gentlewoman. She was young, beautiful, and accomplished; and, hence, I have no excuse to offer for his senseless and irrational determination never to give way, even when opposition was useless and of no avail. When he found that he could no longer prevent his marriage, he might at least have remembered that Lionel was his only son; he might have made the best of that which he was powerless to hinder; he might have been magnanimous if he had not the heart to be affectionate and generous; and, hence, I have no excuse to offer for him on this head.

I can readily understand, too, the displeasure which he felt when his son married one who was not of the ancient faith; but, when, in the course of a few months, she became an ardent and devoted Catholic, I cannot understand how, as a reasonable, not to say a religious man, or, at all events, a man professing religious principles and practices, he persevered in his displeasure, and refused to listen to the voice either of reason, of affection, or religion. But, as I have said, he

never relented, he never gave way. He kept the skeleton in the cupboard closely barred and bolted in. He nursed his wrath to the last, although it fed on his own heart's blood. He walked the desolate path, which his own hands had strewn with the withered leaves of blighted love and of blasted hopes, unpitying and unpitied. In his wrath he had sworn by his Maker's name never to look upon the face of his son again, and he kept his impious and accursed oath, even to the very end.

When I returned to England, after an absence of nearly three years, I found my friend more changed than I can well describe. I had gone abroad very weak and delicate, I returned in comparatively good health. I was more or less prepared from his letters to find him anything but strong, but I was not prepared to see him looking so utterly worn and weary—so fagged and tired out. As he seized me by my hands and drew me to his breast, his eyes lighted up for a moment with the old fire, and I thought him as handsome and as noble as ever. But, in a moment or two, the fire died out, to be succeeded by the haggard careworn look which I soon found to be habitual with him.

His wife had now been a Catholic more than a year, and thus he had escaped many dangers and many trials which I had dreaded so much when first contemplating his union. He had run a great risk, and a risk which no man has a right to run.

God had dealt very mercifully with him, and I think my friend was fully conscious, not only of the evils which he had escaped, but of the immense debt of gratitude which he owed to Him who had been thus liberal to him beyond either his deserts or his expectations.

When he introduced me to his wife, and I saw how beautiful, how good, and how devoted she was to him, I could understand more clearly than I had done before the strength of the determination which had kept him firm, in spite of all the efforts of his father to turn him from his purpose. I could well understand and appreciate the look of honest pride which mantled on his face, and made him look every inch one of nature's noblemen, as he led her over to me and told her that I had ever been a friend and a brother to him.

They were living in lodgings, and I had not been with them half-an-hour before I perceived but too plainly that they were miserably poor. Poor fellow! he tried to laugh it off at first, but he was by far too honest and too straightforward to keep up the deceit long. He only waited until she had left the room to bring down my little god-son who had been born to them in my absence, and to whom I had stood sponsor by proxy. As soon as she was out of hearing, he turned to me in the old, frank, honest, hearty way.

"You see, Arthur," he said, "there's no use in pretending to be what we are not. The truth is that we are very poor, and if my wife were not the

best manager in the world, I don't know how we should make ends meet. It seems rather a strange thing, doesn't it," he went on, in a half-bantering tone of voice, but with the tears standing in his eyes all the while, "to see the Heir of Ravenshale without the means of paying his butcher's bill, but I assure you that unpleasant complication of affairs has happened more than once. I assure you too, Arthur, that the problem of making ends meet is much more difficult of solution than is sometimes imagined. I have to earn the bread which we eat by my pen, and I can promise you that it is bread hardly earned, to say nothing of its being salted by tears. But," he added quickly, as he saw how concerned and sad I grew at his tale, "but, you know, Arthur, for all that I'm very happy. It is a bit of a trial, but it can't last for ever—my father will relent some of these days, and, then, all will be right. At any rate, I try and keep a cheerful heart, hoping for the best; and so long as I am sustained and encouraged by the noble patience and the devoted love of her whom I have only brought to poverty and suffering, I can bear a deal more than I have yet had to sustain. God has been very good to me, Arthur. God has been very good to me," he went on, raising his eyes to heaven, and seeming for a moment to forget my presence. "Yes, He has been good to me, far beyond my deserts. I thank Him very humbly for the past. I look to him with hopeful confidence for the future. I

put my trust in God, and I leave the rest to Him."

I would fain have said something to him, if it had only been to tell him how much I pitied him, how deeply I revered him, how intimately I sympathized with him in his trials and unmerited sufferings, but the words were wanting to me; and, so, I could only press his hand in mine, and leave my tears to give expression to the feelings of my heart; those feelings which, as we stood there, hand in hand, looking into each other's eyes, found an expression and an utterance infinitely plainer, more emphatic and distinct, than human words or human tongue could ever have imparted to them.

In the sincerity of my love for my friend, in the truthfulness of my inmost heart, I think I may say, without presumption or affectation, that all this was infinitely painful to me. It was all the more painful, because, with all the will in the world, and with some of the means to do so, I was utterly impotent to help my friend. I had more money than I well knew what to do with, and, yet, I could not offer it to him. If it had been possible for me to forget the noble nature that was sensitive even to an excess: if it had been possible for me to lose sight of that delicate sense of honour which had had so large a share in bringing upon him those trials which were palpably crushing him to the earth under their cruel weight, it would have been impossible for him to

forget the one or the other. Dearly as I loved him, I honoured him more. I loved him too deeply, and I honoured him too profoundly, to dare to wound his sensitive nature, even most remotely, by the offer of money or of pecuniary aid; and any other aid I was utterly powerless to give him.

If Farleye Hall had been situated in any other part of the country, I might perhaps have prevailed upon them to live there during my absence. Situated as it was, within a mile of Ravenshale, that was out of the question. The most that I could accomplish was to prevail upon them to come and make a long visit to me at the seaside, where I stayed for some months after the death of my father and mother.

Again I went abroad, and for a longer time than before. Lionel often wrote to me, and, lightly as he touched on his trials, cheerfully as he spoke of his hard work, he could not conceal from me the fact that things were becoming worse and worse with him. When I returned once more to England, after an absence of four years, Lionel was the first to welcome me and the fair young bride whom I only brought from the sunny south that she might wither away beneath my ever-watchful eye—that she might fade and die under the cold harsh sky of our northern clime.

When, a year or so later on, I lay with my face close to the cold cold face of my darling's corpse; with no wish in my breast save that I might never

raise my head again from the bier on which my earthly happiness lay buried in her pulseless heart; it was Lionel who brought my little child and placed him in my arms, that he might thus teach me I had something left to love and live for—teach me the lesson, which, in truth, I was almost too deeply stricken to care to learn—teach me, in a word, how to be a man. His delicate sympathy, his pure and gentle nature, taught him and taught him truly, that the feeble wailing cry of my motherless child would speak to my desolate soul with a force which no other voice could claim, and rouse me to my duty when no other power on earth might have the charm to win me to it.

And, so it was. As I felt the tiny infant on my breast, as I felt his little hand upon my face, as I listened to his feeble wailing cry, for the first time I raised my head from the bier where it had rested night and day since my dear one died; for the first time I had the courage to look upon the calm cold face, and when I saw how happy and how tranquil it appeared, when I saw the happy smile that played upon her lips, when I saw how calmly and how sweetly she slept in the peace and rest of God, I took heart and strength once more. I drew my little infant closer to my breast, and, looking for the last last time upon my darling's placid happy face, vowed that I would strive to live for her dear sake; vowed that I would strive to face the future like a man; vowed my future life, with all its aspirations and its

hopes, to the little child who slept upon my breast, and neither knew nor cared in his hapless innocence that his mother's smile would never light upon his face again, that never more his mother's arms would fold him to her breast, that his pretty face would never feel again the pure and priceless pressure of his mother's lips. Through all the troubles of my great and nameless grief, Lionel was a true friend and brother to me. Without his watchful love and care I think I should never have roused myself from my sorrow. I should never have rallied and taken heart to face the future that now lay so clear and plain before my eyes.

* * * * *

Some years more, and nothing but the same sad story still. Nearly eighteen years had passed away since Sir Lionel Ravenshale drove his only son with curses from his door; and the proud baronet had shown no sign of relenting yet. Those eighteen years of ceaseless toil, of worrying care, of suffering all the more bitter because it was concealed and hidden away from the eyes of men, had done their work. I never saw my friend without marking with dismay that he was growing an old man long before his time. What I could do to alleviate his hard fate I did with all my heart and soul; but the most that he would allow me to do was so small and utterly insufficient to afford him any real or permanent help, that I was ashamed to force it on him. No! with

his fine sense of honour, with his noble delicacy, untouched and untainted to the very last, he walked his weary way along the path that was marked out for him to tread, never caring how his feet were torn by the briars in his way, so long as the world, for which he was all too good, could not rob him of those noble qualities which made him such a true and perfect English gentleman. Fighting the hard fight bravely to the end, he fell, when that fight was done, like a true and valiant knight, with his face to the world whose frowns he had despised with such a manly strength and grace; with the weapons of his honour and his truth untarnished and unsullied in his hands.

I had seen him a few weeks previously to the stormy night on which this story opened, and, although, I thought him looking weak and ill, I had no idea that anything was seriously wrong with him, or that the end was so near. But, it had come upon him all at once. The waters of his life were emptied out; and, in the flower of his days, in the very prime of his years, worn out but unconquered, bent but unbroken, discomfited but unsubdued, he had lain him down upon the bed from which in the inscrutable decrees of that Providence whose designs are often most merciful when they seem most cruel, and most wise when they seem most unfathomable, he was never to rise again.

I said in the beginning that it was a long story, but you have it now. And, now, too, you

understand how it was that, whilst his father never moved a step, I was hurrying through the winter's snow that I might look my last look into his glazing eyes—that I might receive the last whispered words of the hapless Heir of Ravens-halle.

CHAPTER V.

IN PACE.

I TRAVELLED all that day through the wintry snow, and late at night reached my destination. Without waiting to refresh myself after my long and wearisome journey, I hurried away to the house of my friend, lest, perchance, I might after all my haste be too late. I cannot tell you what a relief it was to me when, after a very brief delay, the door of the room into which I had been shown opened, and the venerable old priest who had been chaplain at Ravenshale for more than forty years came forward to welcome me. He had baptized both Lionel and myself, he had taught us how to make our first simple confession, from his holy hand we had received the priceless Body and Blood of our Lord in our innocent and our holy First Communion, and I could not but feel how fitting it was, if it were God's holy will that he should die, that my friend should make his last confession on earth to him to whom he had made his first, that he should receive the last sacred rites of religion from the same sympathising hand which had poured upon his head the saving waters which had made him a child of God and an inhe-

ritor of that kingdom of which he was hastening to take possession.

The old man came forward and took my hand in his. For a moment or two neither of us could speak, but, at length, I mastered myself sufficiently to enquire whether my friend still lived, and, if so, whether there was any chance of his ultimate recovery.

“Lionel still lives,” he answered, “and there is no immediate danger: that is to say, he may linger for a few days; but I grieve to add that the medical attendants give us no hope of his ultimate recovery. It seems to be a complete break-up of the system. If we could stimulate him to make a vigorous effort there might perhaps be some chance, but he appears utterly indifferent to life, utterly broken down and worn out. And, yet, he is so patient, so meek, so resigned,” the old man went on, turning away his head as he spoke, “that it is enough to break one’s heart to look upon his poor pale face, and to know as we know, that the noble life is so near its close. If it were not for the better life which is already almost within his grasp, if it were not for the blessed peace which is waiting for his coming, if it were not for the mantle of infinite love which the compassionating hand of God is already throwing in all its fulness around this poor weary lamb, his would be a sad and cruel lot indeed. But, the better things are close at hand—the better things are surely close at hand. My poor

boy, my poor hapless boy," the old man continued, turning to me; "I have done my best, Mr. Arthur, to make peace, but all my efforts have been fruitless. Sir Lionel either disbelieves, or pretends to disbelieve, that his son is so very ill. At all events, he refused to accompany me hither. But, for my part, nothing but sheer inability should prevent me from being here at such a time as this. I baptized him, Mr. Arthur. I taught him his catechism. I watched over all his boyish years—but, why need I tell you this, for you and he were always more like brothers than mere friends, and you were both of you little boys at my knee together. You know as well as I do what a true and noble and perfect Christian gentleman he has always been; and, although it is a melancholy duty, although it almost breaks my heart to have it to perform, still, as in God's good pleasure it must be so, I am very thankful that He has allowed me to smooth the path of my boy to the other and the better world which is so near at hand. I thank God very humbly that it is my hand which will be raised over him for the last time he will need the ministry of a priest ere he stands face to face with God, to receive the crown of glory from the hands of the Great High Priest of us all. I thank God very humbly that it will be my privilege to help him on his way through the dark and gloomy valley of death, to whisper in his closing ears those blessed words of Faith, and Hope, and Love, of which his whole life has been

but a living act, those virtues which are so soon to blossom forth in him in all the sweetness and the fragrance of the everlasting spring. O Mr. Arthur, it is a sad and solemn duty, and one which I had never thought to be called upon to perform; but, since it must be so, I thank my God that I am at hand to perform it. I thank my God for this His goodness to me."

The poor old man, who had been faithful to the father without forgetting the noble qualities of the son, who had done his best to make peace between them, and, when that was impossible, had ever, hoping better things, prayed for the father, and kept alive in his faithful true old heart the love which he had ever felt and cherished for the son; laid his head upon his arms as they rested on the mantel-piece and cried, honestly and openly; without any pretence of hiding the tears which, welling up from the very depths of his pure and simple soul, were gathered up, I doubt me not, by angel hands and carried as a precious tribute to be laid before the throne of that God whose faithful minister he had been through so many years of his spotless holy and unblemished life.

As for me, I am but too proud to own that I mingled my tears with his, only striving, now and then, to kiss his hand, that thus I might pay some little tribute to his holiness and his zeal; that thus I might express how intimately I felt his devoted service to my friend; how deeply beyond all expression I appreciated that faithful love which had

only grown warmer with his growing years, and which was warmest, truest, deepest, now that he upon whom it had been lavished would in a few short fleeting hours be all beyond its reach, but not, let us hope and believe, beyond its knowledge in the better land where the love that was only less pure in as far as it was earthly shall have been cleansed from its earthly dross to shine for evermore in the reflected rays of the Infinite Love Itself.

I had only been in the house a few moments when Lionel, who had heard of my arrival, sent down to beg of me to go to him. When I entered the room I found his wife and his two children by his side. He lay upon his bed, with his face turned towards the door; but even in the hurry and anxiety of my entrance, I could see that his countenance brightened up, and that an expression of pleasure and relief took possession of it, as I walked over to him. I had not had much experience of sickness and death, but as I looked into his poor pale face I knew at once that there was no hope for him. I saw, alas! but too plainly, that death had set his seal upon him, and that it was only a matter of time, and, in all human probability, a very short time. As, in the knowledge of what was so soon to come upon him, I bent down and pressed my lips to his brow, he raised his hands and putting them round my neck held my face close to his own for some little space. It was some minutes before either of us could

speak, but he was the first to break the painful silence.

“It was very good of you to come to me, Arthur,” he faintly whispered, “but, it was no more than I expected of you. I am going home fast,” he continued, his breath coming in great gasps with the effort of speaking, “and, I go rejoicing. But I was very anxious to see you once more before I went, and it was very good of you to come to me.”

“O my dear, dear, fellow,” I answered through my tears, “what is there that I would not gladly do for you. But, it is not so bad as that,” I went on, simulating a hope which I did not entertain, “please God, we shall bring you round, for we cannot afford to lose you yet. Only take heart, and all will yet be well.”

He did not answer me in words, but as he looked up into my face with a glance of piteous resignation which it wrung my inmost heart to see, and quietly shook his head with a motion that was more expressive than any language, I saw how utterly he had given up all hope of life, how intimately he realized the stern sad fact that this world with all its hopes, its sorrows, and its joys, had passed away for evermore from him.

After a little while he expressed a wish to be left alone with me. When they had retired he turned to me and asked me to raise him in his bed. “I want to talk to you a little, Arthur,” he said, “and it is almost more than I can manage.”

I put some covering round him, and raising him in his bed, took him in my arms and held him on my breast. "I was anxious to see you, Arthur, before I went home," he whispered. "I should not like to have died without looking into your face once more—without thanking you once more for all your faithful love and friendship towards me and mine." As I listened to his words I strove in vain to speak to him in return, but I drew him closer and more tenderly to my breast. "Besides," he presently continued, "I am leaving my poor children at the very time they most require a father's love and care. You know, Arthur," he went on, drawing his breath more and more painfully, "my poor boy will soon be heir to Ravenshale. I have presumed so much upon your love for me as to name you guardian to my children. But, Arthur," he cried with a piteous earnestness in his failing voice, and with an effort to get one of his poor wasted arms about my neck, "but, Arthur, I want to ask more than this of you; I want to ask you to be a father to my poor children, and a friend to my poor widow, when I am gone. Promise me this, my dear old friend, and then indeed I can go to my rest in peace. Promise me this, and you will take away the last pang which troubles my dying bed."

It is no matter what I said to him, or in what words I called my God to witness how faithfully I would fulfil the sacred trust which he committed to my care; how, to the best of my poor abilities,

I would be a father to his poor orphans, and a faithful friend and counsellor to his desolate widow. Let it suffice to say that it was my priceless privilege to remove the last pang from the heart of my noble and my faithful friend; my priceless privilege to add a last ray of happiness to the closing hours of as true, as pure, and noble-hearted a man, as ever drew the breath of life.

For one instant I felt the tender motion of the hand that lay upon my neck. As once again he looked up into my eyes, I understood what was in his heart; and pressed my lips, with much of love but more of reverence, to the brow that was already cold with the sweats of death. Then he whispered, and they were the last words having reference to earthly matters which I ever heard him speak, "God bless you, Arthur, and reward you to the full for this. You have made me very happy. I go—I go rejoicing. There, lay me down if you please, for I am very tired, and leave me now to God. I have done for ever with the world. Leave me to my God.

I laid him down and left him to his God. But a little while, and full of faith, of hope, of love, fortified with every aid with which Holy Church and priestly ministration can surround the dying Christian's bed—with loving eyes to watch, and loving hands to tend him, to the very last—he slept the long last sleep which knows no waking, save the blessed waking of the world to come. More happy in his blessed death than in his hap-

less life, in the peace and rest of Christ he gently fell asleep.

* * * * *

Ah me! ah me! for the old old story of sorrow and of death! And, now, whilst tender hands are closing with a loving touch the dead man's eyes, and folding his arms in gentle peace and rest upon his pulseless breast, let Sir Lionel Ravenshale nerve himself to bear as best he may the cruel tidings which are on their way to him. Let him, if it please him so, brazen it out before the world, even to the very end. Let him, if he will have it thus, draw yet another bolt upon the closet where he strives to hide away the skeleton which haunts him night and day with its ever-abiding, ever-loathsome presence. Yea, let him do all this, and a thousand times more, if it be pleasing to him. But, in the secret chambers of the stately house which his own mad pride has made so lonely and so desolate, let him cast the empty sham away. In the silence and the stillness of the midnight hour, when he stands face to face with the naked truth, with none but God to judge between them, let him trample the miserable pretence, the wretched mockery, beneath his feet. Let him bow the proud neck, let him bend the stubborn knee. If his heart be not all turned to stone, let him weep and wail for the evil he has done. Let him sprinkle the ashes over his head. Let him clothe his proud flesh in haircloth. Let him do penance—stern, rigid, uncompromising penance.

If not for his desolate home—if not for his hapless son—at least for the sake of his own poor soul, let him cry aloud, in the bitterness of a broken heart, to God. Let him weep and wail, if, perchance, he may find mercy and pardon for the evil which he has done, for the evil which all his tears can never wash away, for the lost life which all his penance can never restore.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR LIONEL RAVENSHALLE, FOR ONCE IN HIS LIFE,
FORGETS HIMSELF FOR SOME LITTLE SPACE.

The death of my friend, and the charge which he had so solemnly and so touchingly confided to my care, imposed upon me new burthens and new responsibilities from which, whilst I felt all their gravity and all their weight, I did not shrink; and, which, with the assistance of God, I determined to discharge to the very best of my poor ability. Thus much, without egotism or empty boasting, I think I may venture to say for myself.

Mrs. Lionel Ravenshale, the widow of my poor friend, was a true and a noble woman. I had, for reasons already given, opposed their marriage with all my might and main, as I should most assuredly have done again if I could by any chance have been again placed in the same position. Having premised this, let me repeat that she was a true and a noble woman. Through weal and through woe, through many years of bitter suffering and of heavy privations, she had done her duty, truly and faithfully, generously and unflinchingly, to my friend. She had done her best, I believe that she had done her very

best, to lighten his burthens and to clear away the dark shadows which gathered before his feet; and, when, spite of her devoted love, she had not been able to effect the one or the other, like a true woman she had helped him to carry those burthens, and she had clung to his side with never-wavering fidelity as he picked his weary way through the darkness and the gloom which beset his path. When she had first learnt how much Sir Lionel was opposed to her marriage with his son, she had with true feminine delicacy of feeling begged and besought my friend to free her from that troth which she had plighted him in the hope and expectation of better and happier things. But, when she had seen that his happiness depended upon her fidelity; when she had seen that she could not take back her plighted troth from him without taking at the same time the sunshine out of his life; then, like a true and a noble woman, she had chosen his lot for her lot, and his path for her path. Then, like a true and a noble woman as she was, she had vowed her life with all its aspirations and its hopes to him, that she might devote that life in loving duty and in loving service to him whom she honoured even more than she loved, whom she revered even more than she worshipped. How truly and how faithfully she had, in honour and in reverence, in obedience and in love, discharged her duties as a Christian wife, no one but God and the husband who now as we fondly hoped stood in the presence

of that God fully knew. But I, too, had learnt some little of it during my frequent intercourse with them. I had learnt more of it from a few words of his on his dying bed. One day when she and I alone were sitting by his side, it chanced that she made some remark to the effect that it would have been better if he had never known her, that she had only brought trouble and affliction upon him. An expression of intense pain passed across his face as she spoke, and for the only time during those last few solemn days of his closing life did I see him truly troubled. "O my wife," he cried out quickly, and with a deprecating motion of his hands, "O my true, my faithful wife, how can you say such a hard and a cruel thing. I think that man was never blessed as I have been blessed in you. I brought you to poverty and to want, and God only knows what a true and faithful wife you have been to me. God only knows the measure of your faithful love. God only knows what a happy man I have ever been since the first day you came to share my humble home with me." Before the words were well out of his mouth she was on her knees by the side of his bed, covering his hand with her kisses and bathing it with her tears. I felt that it was no place for me and I stole gently away from the room and left them there alone; but, ere I went, I had learnt more than I had ever known before of the happiness which her faithful love and service had brought to his heart and home.

She was as firm as she was gentle—as determined, where there was question of duty or right, as she was yielding and forgetful of self where her own gratification or ease alone were at stake. Possessing such a mother as they did, a mother endowed with so many noble qualities and so many womanly virtues, my duty towards my friend's children would as a matter of course be rendered lighter than otherwise it might have been. However, lightened as it might be, and with all the assistance which I might derive from her prudence and her watchful love and care for her children, I could not but feel that my charge was one of no ordinary nature, one which it would require all my energy and all my zeal to discharge as I ought.

My friend had left two children. The eldest, Marmaduke, was of course now the heir to the Baronetcy and the estates of Ravenshale. His father had called him by one of the oldest and most honoured of the family names, and, in very truth, he was worthy to bear it. He was at this time nearly twenty years of age, and there was not, I am sure, in all England a handsomer, a truer-hearted, or more manly youth. I never looked at his hair which shone in the sun like threads of gold; I never saw the somewhat haughty but infinitely graceful pose of his noble head; I never gazed into the liquid depths of his deep blue eyes without being carried back again, some twenty years or more, to the days when his father

and I were just beginning to walk the world in all the freshness of our life's young spring; to the happy days when his father, who now lay stark and cold in his grave, was as young, as handsome, as warm, as noble and as true a man, as the youth who stood before me the living image of him who was dead and gone. And, I never looked at him without praying in my inmost heart that his might be a happier lot, that brighter skies might shine upon his head, and smoother paths be spread before his feet, than had fallen to his father's share. But, above all, I prayed and hoped that whether poverty or wealth, happiness or affliction might be his lot, he might through all the phases and changes of his life be as true, as pure and perfect an English gentleman, as his father had been. Knowing his father as I had known him, loving him as I had loved him, reverencing him as I had done, in all my heart and love I could frame no better prayer for this dear boy than that he might be his father's son.

We had given him an education becoming the position which he was destined to hold in after life. I say *we*, because in this one matter I had carried my point with my friend and had insisted upon advancing the money to pay for young Marmaduke's education. I think I am free to mention this fact, because, in the first place, he was my godchild, and, therefore, I had a right and a claim to do something for him; and, secondly, because it was clearly understood that whatever I

advanced was to be returned to me some day or other. If this had not been so I would have managed to conceal this matter from you. I will add, however, that, always preserving the rights of my own little child intact, I would have shared my last penny with my friend, and what I would have done for him I would have done for his son too.

Such was Marmaduke Ravenshalle; and all that I need add is that his grandfather had never seen his face. His sister Ethel was two years younger than her brother. As I am pretty sure that I should fail were I to attempt to sketch her, I shall not endeavour to do so. I will only say that she took more after her mother than her father. Marmaduke was, at least in appearance, a true Ravenshalle; but whilst Ethel bore an unmistakeable likeness to him, she did so notwithstanding the dark hair and eyes which she inherited from her mother. My experience may not be very great, but this I will say (not speaking, however, of her whose name I never mention now except in my humble prayers to God), that a purer, more innocent, or more holy being than Ethel Ravenshalle never came across my path. Whilst she was fully endowed with those noble qualities which were so conspicuous in her mother; whilst she was fitted to adorn and add a lustre to any rank or station in life to which she might be called; I had, from her earliest years, remarked in her an ever-growing spirit of

earnest fervent piety, a simplicity of character, a love of retirement, and of what I may call, for want of a better name, the less showy and unobtrusive virtues, which seemed to me to mark her out for higher and for holier things than those to which ordinary mortals are called—those higher and those holier things which no man may put out his hand unasked to take, but which, when they are given, are priceless in their unpurchaseable worth, as they are bright and beautiful in the infinite radiance of their heavenly origin.

Such was the precious deposit which my friend in his dying hour had committed to my charge. Is it any wonder that, as I thought on all that it imposed upon me, and how grave were the interests which were placed in my keeping, I almost trembled at what was before me? Is it any wonder if I never ceased to pray that I might have strength to do my duty like a true and honest man to the children of him who, though now dead and gone, would live for ever in my heart's best love?

As soon as I had had time to think a little and to look to the future, it became at once quite evident to me that, before I took any steps in regard to the family of my friend, I should have an interview with Sir Lionel Ravenshale. After all, he was more to them than I was, and although I had been appointed their guardian, still it seemed to me only right and just that I should

confer with the baronet on the matter and learn his wishes, if, indeed, he entertained any regarding the provision to be made for the widow and children of his son. Accordingly, after an absence of more than a month I wrote to let Roger know that I should be at home on a certain day. I had never been away from Farleye for so long a time at once since my little Pet had been left to my watchful care; and I leave you to imagine the scene there was when once again I arrived at my humble home, and my little child was clasped once more to the father's heart that only lived and beat for his dear sake.

The morning after my arrival I took my way to Ravenshale. I had never been within its doors since the marriage of my friend. At that time Sir Lionel had, altogether without foundation, taken it into his head that I had encouraged his son in the step which had been so displeasing to him. Some angry words had risen between us on the subject, and, irritated, no doubt, in his unreflecting rage by the intimacy which I still continued to maintain with his son, he had shown so little inclination for my company and society that you may be quite certain I had not sought to force it on him. We sometimes exchanged a few polite words when I went up to Ravenshale for mass on Sundays, or if we happened to meet in the village street, but for the last twenty years this had been the extent of our intercourse.

I sent up my name and a request that he would

see me on urgent business if it were convenient for him to do so. After a little delay the servant returned with a message that Sir Lionel was not very well, and would be obliged to me if I would walk up to his private room. As I followed my conductor through the stately house I could not but feel how lonely and how desolate it seemed, how comfortless and cold, spite of the magnificent furniture, the carving, and the pictures which met the eye at every turn. I could not but feel too how different all this might and ought to have been, and what a bitter price the proud old man was paying for what I dare say he considered his consistency and his firmness, but what I humbly confess I considered his wicked obstinacy and pride.

My reflections were speedily brought to a close by our arrival at Sir Lionel's room. The servant, after knocking at the door, drew to one side a heavy velvet curtain, and passing through I stood at once in the presence of him whom I had come to seek. It was some months since I had seen Sir Lionel Ravenshale, and although at that time he had shown evident marks of his growing years, still he was a straight, portly, handsome gentleman. Hence I was altogether unprepared for the sight of the wan, broken, feeble, old man who, as I entered the room, rose with an evident effort from his chair, and moved a step or two forward to meet me. As I took the hand which he held out to me with all the old stately grace

and polish, I suppose he must have noticed on my face the impression which the sight of him, so broken, so changed and beaten down, had made upon me; for, almost before I had time to speak to him he began to apologise to me, in a voice nearly as broken as his appearance, for receiving me in his room.

"I am growing an old man, Mr. Farleye," he said, "and I cannot bear troubles as well as I used to do. I must ask you to excuse me for receiving you in my room. I am growing an old man," he repeated, querulously, "and troubles tell upon me sadly now. Yes, I am an old man, and I have had many disappointments. God help me, I have had many disappointments." And as he spoke, he turned hastily away and began to cry.

It was infinitely painful to me to see him thus, and yet, what could I say to him? I was too honest, and the memory of my friend was too dear and sacred to me, to allow me to pretend to offer any consolation to the wretched old man, who, after all, in simple truth, was only reaping what he had sown. In the pride and strength of his manhood he had chosen to sow the storm, and it was only just, that in his broken old age, in the desolation which he had brought upon himself, he should reap the whirlwind; still, I could not bear to see the grief which, just though it might be, was terrible to behold. I could not listen to the sobs and cries which broke from his heaving breast—I could not watch the tears

coursing down his furrowed cheeks, without endeavouring to do something—as much as was in my power, at least—to calm and comfort him. I had better have left him to himself. The tears which, perchance, were wrung from his proud heart at the sight of me, the true and faithful friend of his only son whom he had hounded on by his unforgiving pride to death itself, might, perhaps, have softened that heart and brought him in the end to better things. But no sooner did I speak to him—no sooner did I seek to comfort him, than, recalled to himself by the sound of my voice, he dashed away with a hasty and imperious gesture of his hand the tears which were trickling down his face. With a sudden effort he drew himself up to his full height, and, in a moment more, turned round to me with an expression on his face which put an effectual end to my well-meant efforts at consolation. The salutary moments had passed away. Broken he was and feeble, with lines of suffering and cankering sorrow dug deep into his face; but cold—stern—hard as ever—he stood before me once again as strong in the evil strength of his devilish pride, as unreflecting in his unreasonable anger, as selfish and as wicked in his wrath as he had ever been in the evil days of his manhood, when, with the curse which was now coming home to him a thousand-fold, but, alas! all in vain, he had driven his only son for ever from his heart and home.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, in a cold, hard voice; "I beg your pardon for thus forgetting myself, but, as I have already told you, I am not very well at present, and little matters easily disturb me. I will not trouble you again."

Forget himself, indeed! It would have been better for him, and better for those who were infinitely his superiors in everything that constitutes honour, and worth, and truth, if he had forgotten himself more frequently than he had done.

He motioned me to a chair, and I presently proceeded to lay before him, as briefly as possible, the matter which had brought me into his presence.

"Perhaps you may be aware, Sir Lionel," I said, "that your son has done me the honour of making me, jointly with his widow, the guardian of his children?" He made a stern inclination of his head, and I went on. "You must also be aware," I continued, "that your son, as was inevitable under the circumstances, has left his family all but penniless." I spoke out thus plainly since nothing was further from my mind than to mince matters to him. A dark frown passed across his face as I alluded to the poverty for which he alone was responsible, but he did not interrupt me, and I resumed. "Before considering what provision can be made for those whom surely you cannot wish to starve, I thought it right and fit to learn your wishes on this

matter, as I cannot doubt that it must have already formed the subject of your serious consideration. You will allow me to add in all sincerity, Sir Lionel," I went on, "that, whilst I most certainly did not seek the position in which I find myself placed; finding myself in it, I have no desire, save to discharge the duties which it imposes upon me in such a manner as best befits my love to him who is gone—as is most consonant with the respect and the dignity which are due to your ancient and your honourable race."

"I thank you, sir," he answered coldly, but without any of the harshness in his voice which had grated upon my ear when last I heard it. "I thank you for your attention and for the trouble to which you have put yourself in order to learn my wishes. Before proceeding, I will state frankly, that, since Mr. Lionel—my son," he added, correcting himself after a moment's hesitation—"has thought fit to pass me by, there is no one whom I would so willingly see in the position of guardian to his children as yourself." Pass him by! Unreasonable to the end! I bent my head in acknowledgment of the compliment to myself which his words implied, and he went on. "You are right in supposing that this matter has formed the subject of my most serious and earnest consideration. Although my son forgot it," he continued, with the same obstinate closing of his eyes to facts which had been the bane of his life,

"it is not possible for me to forget what is due to the ancient race whom I represent, and to the name which I have the honour to bear. I need not detain you long nor trouble you with many words, since I have, quite definitively and positively, made up my mind on this matter. In one word," he concluded, "I am not only willing but anxious to take charge of my grandchildren, and to place them in that position which it is fitting that they should occupy. I shall do so, however, on one condition alone, viz., that they come to me at once, and that they remain entirely with me. In other words, I shall allow no interference with them on the part of any person—on the part of *any* person whatever," he added with an emphasis which I could not pretend to misunderstand.

I was determined, however, that there should be no possible chance of my mistaking the meaning of his words. "Am I to understand," I said, "that you are willing to undertake the charge of your son's children on the condition that Mrs. Lionel relinquishes all control over them?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, "you conceive my meaning precisely; with this addition, that she not only relinquishes all control over them, but also that she does not attempt to force her way here, or endeavour to see my grandchildren without my express permission."

"But," I cried, as soon as I recovered from the amazement which was caused by these cruel words of his—words which he uttered as coldly

and deliberately as if the matter in debate were one of the utmost indifference to him, "but, Sir Lionel, surely, surely, you forget that she is their mother."

"No, sir," he answered me quickly and bitterly, "no, sir, I do not forget that. Would that I could forget it, but I have been thinking of it, night and day, for the last twenty years, and it is not likely that I forget it now. I would give all I possess," he added more bitterly than ever, "to wash the remembrance of it away. But, I never forget it. I never forget it."

I was about to remonstrate with him on the cruelty and harshness of his proposal, but he cut me short. "Excuse me, Mr. Farleye," he said, "but, further argument between us on this matter is useless, and I am not able to bear the fatigue of much conversation. I have quite made up my mind, and nothing will induce me to alter the determination to which I have come. It only remains for those concerned to consider my proposition. If you will have the goodness to bring this proposal under their notice and to acquaint me with the result you will increase the obligations under which I already lie to you."

As I saw quite plainly that any further argument with this obstinate proud old man would be worse than useless, I rose to take my leave. He apologized, on the plea of his ill health, but with all the old stately grace and dignity of manner, for not offering me the hospitality of his house.

As he came over to the door of his room with me, I think some memory of the former and the happier days—some kindly memory of his fair-haired noble boy, began to stir in his desolate and lonely heart. Ere he let me go, he took both my hands and held them kindly in his own for a moment or two.

“I thank you, Mr. Arthur,” he said in a faint voice, “I thank you much for all your kindness to me—and, to mine,” he presently added. Even as he spoke his voice began to break once more, but he struggled with the feelings which were again stirring in his breast and went on. “Since I saw you last you, too, have had many troubles. I trust that you have had strength to bear them like a man. You are young and have yet many years before you. I pray that they may be years of happiness. I pray God to give you more happiness than I either expect or look for. You are young, Mr. Arthur, you are young; but, for me, God help me, I am only a very miserable, wretched, broken, poor old man.”

He wrung my hands and turned hastily away. I passed out of his presence, but the velvet curtain which covered his door had not fallen behind me before I heard his sobs and cries sounding once more, like the wail of a restless spirit, through his lonely and desolate room. As I took my way to my own more humble home, I thought with a grateful heart, how good, notwithstanding all my trials, my God had been to me. As I felt the

arms of my little child once more about my neck; as I felt the little face that lay so close to mine; as I felt the gentle pressure of his pure and childish kiss; as I listened to the innocent prattle of my little lamb; I thought within my heart of hearts that, if all his wealth and all his honours were mine ten thousand thousand times, I would not change my humble lot for that of the Lord of Ravenshale.

And he, the poor old man, for whom, in spite of all, my heart was pierced with anguish, went on fighting his weary fight even to the very end. Fighting with the nameless memories and the ever flitting shadows of the ghostly past—fighting with the stern realities and the crushing woes of the hopeless present—fighting, perchance most of all, with the solemn terrors of the future yet to come, the future in all probability so close at hand for him. Fighting for ever and finding no peace—wailing for ever, and meeting with naught but ever-growing hopeless grief—without the heart to turn himself in penance and in sackcloth to Him from whom alone peace could come—without the heart to humble the proud spirit which had been his curse through life—without the heart to do even at the eleventh hour that which was right, generous, noble, just—beaten, shattered, humbled, but unforgiving, unrelenting, to the end—with his household gods lying, from the fell and cruel blow of his own right hand, a heap of crumbling ruins at his feet—ah me! well

might he cry aloud in the desolation of his lonely heart that he was nothing but a miserable, wretched, broken, poor old man! Well might his cry sound in my ears like the wail of a restless spirit, as he turned away, to draw, no doubt, another bolt upon the door of the closet where he kept the foul skeleton hidden away, as much as might be, from the prying eyes of men!

CHAPTER VII.

“TELL ME,” SHE SAID, “DO YOU COUNSEL ME TO DO THIS THING?”

AFTER spending a day or two at home, I again returned to London to lay Sir Lionel's proposition before her whom it most nearly concerned. I thought I knew her well enough to be quite certain what course she would take in this grave and most serious matter. Still, the interests at stake were of such an all-important nature, and the conclusion to which she might come would in all probability have such an influence upon the future of her children, no less than upon her own happiness, that I deemed it my duty to lay Sir Lionel's proposal simply, plainly, and without comment of mine, before her.

The morning, therefore, after my return to London, I waited upon her and told her that I had been down to Ravenshale and seen Sir Lionel.

As delicately as I was able, softening down as much as I could his harshness and his unforgiving resentment against her, but, plainly and simply, I laid his proposal before her. I offered no comment upon the proposition, nor gave her any insight into my own views upon the matter. I

simply stated the proposition. I laid before her the immense advantages which would at once accrue to her children in a worldly point of view from her acceptance of it. I laid before her with equal plainness the cost at which these advantages would have to be purchased; and, having thus done what I conceived to be my duty, I left the result to be determined by her own true, noble, and womanly heart; by those instincts which I felt quite sure would not lead her astray on a matter like this. I felt quite certain that she would act as it became her to act as a woman and a mother, and I was not mistaken.

Soften it down as I might, it was a cruel and a hard proposition. I suppose the truest and the purest instinct left in the human heart; the instinct which elevates and raises it nearest to God; the instinct which has its fullest, purest, and most perfect realization in the Madonna, is the love of the mother for her children. They may disgrace her love, but her eye can never see the disgrace. They may prove themselves unworthy of her, unworthy of her spotless love, unworthy of her ceaseless never-wearying care, unworthy even of her very name, but she is the last to discover that unworthiness. If the world cast them off, she sees nothing in the rejection but an additional reason why she should cling all the more closely to them. With the instinct which is so God-like in its truth and its purity, she sees even in their sins only another motive for lavishing upon them

in greater profusion the love which wells up so unceasingly from the fathomless depths of her mother's heart, since, perchance, by this love she may win them back to better and to holier things.

From the cradle to the grave, if it be ordained that her hand is to close the eyes which through her first saw the light; in weal and in woe; in sickness and in health; in prosperity, if it happen to shine upon them; most closely, most nearly, most truly in adversity, if such be their lot; there is one thought which never fades out of the heart of a true and a simple woman; one thought which the strongest waves of adversity and affliction are powerless to wash away; one thought which never shines down upon her soul save in the golden gleams of fidelity and truth; one thought which awaits her opening eyes in the morn and closes them when the trials of the day are over and done; one thought which is her pride and her boast through life, as it is the crown and the glory of her fading years: the blessed thought that God has given it to her to be a mother. As she kneels by the side of the cradle and gazes in the ecstasy of her love upon her sleeping babe; as she waits in gentle patience for the unclosing of those eyes which she knows full well will turn to her with such a longing look as soon as they are opened; as she fondles the tiny hand which rests outside the coverlet, and, even in sleep, clings so confidingly and so earnestly to hers, she realizes something of what it is to be a

mother. In those more solemn moments when she kneels in sacred communion with her God, and never raises her eyes to the cross on which He hangs without finding there in speechless sorrow the Mater Dolorosa who held Him on her Virgin breast in the cave of Bethlehem, and read in His God-like eyes, soft strains of heaven-born music floating in upon her all the while, the story of her wondrous greatness and her matchless dignity—the Mater Dolorosa, who tended Him through all those years so full of nameless mysteries and of priceless privileges—the Mater Dolorosa, who had died a hundred thousand times ere it came to this: ere it was her cruel lot, and yet a lot which she would not exchange for all that human power can give, to stand beneath His cross with a heart so torn and rent with bitter grief—grief all the more bitter because of her utter impotence to soothe His sufferings even by so much as one tender touch of her pitying hand, even by so much as the wiping away of a single tear from His blood-stained face—Oh! yes, it is in moments like this, when the human mother kneels at the foot of her crucifix, and only raises her eyes to look into the face of that other mother who stands there, so grand in her speechless grief, so sublime in her patient woe, so unapproachable in her purity, so infinite in her love, that she realizes to the full what a holy and a blessed thing it is to be a Christian mother!

Yes, what else is there in this world that is half

so pure, half so faithful, half so true, as the love of a mother for her child. I would it were given to this poor pen of mine to treat this theme in a manner approaching even in any degree to its merits. I would it were given to me to bring home to the hearts of those who throw it away, as not worth the having, what a priceless gem it is which they trample under foot. I would I could make them understand that the brightest light which can shine upon the path of life has been wanting to those, who, alas for themselves! have never known the priceless treasure of a mother's long-enduring love. I would it were given to me to proclaim these things with a trumpet tongue that might echo from pole to pole, that, so, perchance, we might have fewer of these precious pearls cast before the unclean beasts of passion, and of sin that is not less grievous because it is thoughtless; that we might not have the grey hairs of so many hapless mothers brought down with sorrow to the grave.

It was to a mother who realized to the full, not only the duties, but the tender privileges of her position, that I had to make the harsh proposition which had been entrusted to me. As she sat before me, so calm and pale, the garb of her recent widowhood appealing so mutely and yet so ineffably to my deepest sympathies and my profoundest pity, I felt in truth that my task was a cruel one, and one of which, for the sake of my very manhood, I was heartily ashamed. But, I

had undertaken it, and I went through with it to the end.

She listened to me calmly and quietly, never interrupting me, till I had done. It was only the sudden blanching of her face, the nervous twitching of her mouth, the restless motion of her hands, which told me how deep was the wound which I was inflicting upon her. When I had finished, she buried her face in her hands for some ten minutes or more: the silence of the room, which was as painful as it was oppressive, only broken every now and then by a sigh which seemed wrung from the very depths of her lacerated heart.

Suddenly she raised her head and looked at me with a piteous expression of suffering on her face. "Will you give me an hour or so to think of this?" she said. "It is a hard thing, and I cannot see my way through it all at once."

"Surely," I answered. "Take an hour, take a day if you wish. There is no need of hurry or precipitation."

"No," she said. "I think an hour will be enough. If you will leave me alone with God and my own heart for an hour, I think I shall be able to see my way through this. I think I shall be able to do my duty."

I left her at once and went up to their little drawing room. Presently, my children, as I had almost begun to consider them, came in to keep me company. Although I had little or no doubt as to the conclusion to which she would come, I

thought it right, after some indifferent conversation, to give them an inkling of what was going on; so that they might be prepared even for the worst. I contrived to represent the case hypothetically, and as if it concerned some person in whom none of us had any peculiar interest. Having done so, I asked Marmaduke what he conceived would be the duty of a mother placed in such a position.

I daresay he half guessed my hidden meaning. At all events, his face flushed with that expression of honest indignation which I had so often seen and admired on his father's countenance in the bygone days; and his lip curled with unutterable disdain, as he answered without a moment's hesitation, that the woman who could willingly part with her children for any consideration on earth was no mother, and that the son who would allow any one to tear his mother from his side was a villain and no man. My brave boy! I knew that his heart was noble and just, I knew that it was true to its inmost core.

He had scarcely done speaking when the door opened, and his mother entered the room. In my first hasty glance I saw at once how severe had been the struggle through which she had passed. It was written far too plainly on her face for me to mistake its meaning. She had, however, wiped away the tears whose traces were still visible, and she walked into the room with a calm dignity and a noble self-possession of which

Sir Lionel himself need not have been ashamed. She seemed surprised to find her children with me, and looking at me with an enquiring glance, seemed for a moment as if inclined to withdraw.

I understood the meaning of her look. "If it seem good to you, Mrs. Lionel," I said, "I think it right and becoming that your children should hear from your own lips the conclusion to which you have come on a matter which concerns them as much as yourself. If I were in your place, I would not ask them to withdraw."

As I spoke, Marmaduke passed hastily over to his mother's side, but, putting him gently away, she came across the room to where I stood, and placing her hand upon my arm looked up piteously into my face.

"You were my darling's truest and best friend," she said in a voice which, spite of all her efforts to restrain herself, quivered with emotion: "tell me, do you counsel me to do this thing?"

"God forbid," I answered, without a moment's hesitation, "that I should counsel you to do anything half so wicked or unnatural."

"Then, I will not do it," she cried in a voice that showed no signs of wavering now. "No, I will never do it. I will not give up my children for all his wealth, if it were ten thousand times what it is."

Ere the words had passed her lips, her son was by her side once more, and had thrown his arm around his mother. It was a gallant sight to look

upon him as he stood there, with flushed face and head thrown proudly back, drawing his mother fondly and protectingly to his side in the conscious strength of his early manhood. "Has he dared," he cried, in a loud and angry voice, "to make such an offer to *my* mother! Tell me," turning to me, "tell me, guardian, has he dared to insult *my* mother by asking her to part from her children?"

"My dear boy," I answered, "you must make great allowances for your grandfather. You know he is old, and labouring under the sting of many fancied injuries. You must judge him kindly, and remember that, however painful his way of putting it, and however unreasonable it may be in itself, he meant this proposal for your good. If your mother had not thought this she would not have been so long in coming to the conclusion at which she has arrived."

He stooped down and kissed his mother fondly on the brow ere he answered me. "Yes, I will try and judge him kindly," he said. "I will try and think as well of him as ever I can. But, guardian," he continued, as he came over to me and took my hands in his, "tell him from me, that he neither knows my mother nor my mother's children. Tell him from me," he went on, as his voice faltered in its ineffable tenderness, "tell him from me, that my mother is dearer to her children than all the world beside. Tell him from me, that, if need be, we can all starve together, but

that all his wealth will not win us for a single day from our mother's side. Tell him from me, that our mother's love is a priceless jewel which nothing that he can offer us will tempt us to part with. Tell him this, dear guardian, as kindly as may be, but, tell him this in such a manner that there may be no chance of his mistaking our meaning."

He wrung my hands as he spoke, and, turning away, drew his mother once more fondly to his manly heart. As she listened to his noble words, the brave courageous woman who had borne so much, scarcely claiming even the woman's privilege to weep, threw her arms about his neck and cried and wept as if her very heart were breaking up and melting into tears of burning gratitude to God who had given her such a true and faithful son—who had blessed her with children so worthy of a mother's fondest love.

* * * * *

I did not care to face Sir Lionel with the answer which I was charged to return to his proposal. I wrote to him by that night's post, and, whilst I put it as kindly as I could, I left him no room to misunderstand the determination to which they had come regarding the proposition which he had thought fit to make them. I also added, that, as the guardian of these dear children, the resolution which their mother had taken, with their knowledge and approval, had my warmest sanction and approbation.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHANGES.

* * * * *

You must, kind reader, suppose some twelve months or so to have passed over our heads since the events recorded in the two or three preceding chapters of this simple history. My little child and I, waited on of course by Roger, have been living near London for the last nine months. I had never thought to leave Farleye Hall again until I left it for good and all; but when I once saw, with a clearness which I could not mistake, that it was my duty to do so, at least for a time, I venture to say for myself that I did my duty without shrinking from it because it happened to be somewhat painful.

Circumstances into which I need not enter in this place made it quite plain to me that Mrs. Lionel Ravenshale and her children could not do better than remain in London. It was equally plain to me, in view of the solemn responsibilities placed upon me—responsibilities from which, as I have already said, I did not shrink, that it was my duty to remain near his children, that I might watch over them as he would have done, and

that I might, in as far as it could be so, supply his place to them. Hence, as I could not, for many reasons which are obvious, bring them down to Farleye, it only remained for me to remove to London.

I confess frankly that it was a hard trial to have to leave, even for a space, the home which had become so dear to me on account of the associations which were inseparably connected with it in the deepest and best affections of my heart, and on account of the sorrows no less than the joys which had come to me within its grey old walls. But, hard as the trial was, it was not more than I was prepared to undergo, not only willingly but cheerfully, for the sake of him who was dead and gone—him who would so cheerfully and so willingly have undergone the same for me, if he had been in my place. My little Pet was almost wild with joy at the idea of going to live in London, of which I had often told him such wonderful stories. He was continually asking me when we were to go, and wondering why we did not start at once. My little child had never known the light of his mother's smile. He had never felt the sacred touch of her gentle hands, except when she had held him in her arms for some little space ere she flitted away from him and from me, and then he was not conscious that the arms which clasped him in an embrace which he would never feel again were the arms of his mother. He would sometimes speak to me in his half-

childish, half-old-fashioned way, and ask me questions which I could not answer about his mother, who slept in the brightest corner of the graveyard of Ravenshale church, where the grass was greenest and the flowers brightest; but he did not know—God help him! how was he to know it?—that my heart was buried under that green sod; and hence, he was all anxiety for the day on which we were to start for London, all wonder that I put it off from day to day, in order that I might pay yet another visit to that precious grave.

The great difficulty, however, came from Roger. Poor Roger seemed to shrink with dismay from the idea of leaving once more the dear old home in which he had served my father, my father's son, and my own little child, three generations of Farleyes, and of taking up his abode in London, which he seemed to consider as little better than a very abomination of desolation. He started so many difficulties, and raised so many objections, that I really began to think that he did not wish to leave Farleye, and at last I told him as much in plain words.

"You surely cannot think, Roger," I said to him as kindly as I could, "that I am leaving Farleye Hall as a matter of inclination. It is simply as a duty, and a duty which I cannot and do not wish to escape. I have no choice," I continued, "and, of course, where I go my Pet goes too." ('Yes; I should think so,' cried my Pet, who was present,

interrupting me, and fairly crowing with delight, 'Papa is going to London, Roger, and he has promised me, that I am never never to leave him again.') "But, you know, Roger," I went on, "that is no reason why you should be put to the trouble of leaving the old place at your time of life. Some one will have to look after it in our absence, and who can do so as well as you? It struck me that you might not wish to go with us, but I did not like to mention it, lest you should think that I wanted to get rid of you; and you know, Roger, that you will never hear such a wish as that from the lips of a Farleye of Farleye. You have been with us too long, and have served us too faithfully to leave us now; and where our home is there is yours too, Roger. But," I concluded, "if the idea of this change is distasteful to you, stay by all means at Farleye. Of course, we shall miss you," I added, in order to please the old man, "but we will try and get on as well as we can without you, until we come back to Farleye Hall, which, perhaps, won't be so very long after all; and it will be a comfort to me in my absence to know that the old place is in such faithful and such careful hands."

The expression of poor Roger's countenance as I went on would have been ludicrous, if it had not been painful in its honest grief, and its evident dismay at the prospect of being left behind. It was one thing to grumble at the idea of going; it was another, and a very different

thing, to be taken at his word, and left behind. Roger was a thorough Englishman, of the blunt, honest, good old Yorkshire type, and claimed for himself, in all its fulness, the Englishman's privilege to grumble. But, like many another good grumbler, whilst he would have sturdily resented any attempt to deprive him of this cherished privilege, he would have been still more dismayed to be taken at his word, and treated in accordance with what you might suppose, if words meant anything, to be his wishes. No! Let an Englishman, especially if he happen to be a Yorkshireman, grumble as much as he likes, and, whatever you do, don't contradict him. Let him have his cherished grumble out, but don't think of taking him at his word. Wait a little, until he gets into a better humour. Then, take him quietly; come round him with a few kindly reasonable words; and, if I know anything of English human nature as typified in a Yorkshireman, you are pretty sure of him.

Hence, as soon as poor Roger could find breath, I assure you he gave me "a taste of his tongue," rather more highly spiced than usual. "Well, now," cried Roger, "nobbut listen to that. How you do catch a man up, Master Arty, and go on that way as there isn't neither reason nor sense in. I know nowt about duty and such like, and as to its being your duty to leave t' old Hall to go to London, I've nowt to say to that. It doesn't stand to reason that I should like to go to

that smoky hole where you can't get a mouthful of fresh air, no matter what you pay for it; and, as to a bite o' wholesome victuals, why, I'm told they're not to be had at no price. But, that's neither here nor there," continued Roger. "If its your duty to go, you'll go. I know that well enough, without your tellin' me. All that I know is, that if you, Master Arty, and that bonny bairn, must go to London, it isn't my duty to stop at Farleye, and, I'm not goin' to do't. Why, I do believe," cried Roger, waxing warm, and with more attention to facts than to compliments, "that you don't know a piece o' good meat when you see it; and I should like to know what's to become o' you if them London chaps gets hold o' you, wi' nobody to look after you and to see that you get a taste o' wholesome victuals. I know summat about their thievin' ways. If that bonny bairn goes away to London wi' nobody but you to take care of him, I should like to know" cried Roger, triumphantly, "how he's to get his new milk, God bless him. Why, Mr. Perkins was i' London two months last summer, wi' his daughter that's married there, and he told me that he never saw a drop o' milk all that time that warn't as blue as a tailor's nose on a frosty mornin'. Talk o' milk, indeed! why, it's nobbut water bewitched, and how's that poor bairn to live on such stuff, I'd like to know. No, no, Master Arty," he concluded, with a sudden transition that would have been invaluable to the rhetorician,

from a strain that was almost ridiculous to one that was almost sublime in the pathos of its simple and honest sincerity—"No, no, Master Arty, none so. I didn't pull you out o' that fish-pond more nor forty year ago; I didn't go abroad wi' you into them outlandish countries, when you were scarcely able to hold up your poor head; I didn't promise t' old Squire, the Lord have mercy on him, that I'd never leave you, to go and do it now. I can't help grumbling a bit, now and then, Master Arty; but you know I don't mean it. Its nobbut a way I have, and I'm a'most too old to mend it it now. But, wherever you and my bonny bairn go, Master Arty, there I'll go too, if you'll nobbut let me, and if you won't let me, you'll break my poor old heart, that's all." And Roger, without any affectation or pretence, took out his handkerchief and simply wiped away the tears that were streaming down his honest old cheeks.

"O Papa," broke in my Pet, "you must let poor Roger go with us, you must, indeed. You know, I could never do without poor Roger." And he made his way across the room, and, getting on his knee, put his little arms caressingly about the old man's neck.

Of course I had known well enough from the first that Roger would go with us. However, I was only too happy to give pleasure to himself and my little child by pretending to grant it as a great favour at the special request of my Pet;

and I am quite sure that there was not in all Yorkshire such a happy pair as Roger and his young master after this weighty matter had been arranged so entirely to their mutual satisfaction.

What with disposing of the stock of my modest farm, procuring a suitable person to take charge of the old Hall during our absence, and the other necessary arrangements which had to be made, the next few days were all hurry, bustle, and preparation. But all was ready at last, and, to the intense delight of my little child, the day of our departure fixed.

CHAPTER IX.

"WILL YOU HELP ME FOR MY FATHER'S SAKE."

WE left Farleye Hall on the appointed day. Roger grumbled greatly at being obliged to travel by rail, as he had almost made a solemn vow never to avail himself of that obnoxious means of conveyance. However, there was no help for it, and hence he submitted with the best grace he could assume. Mr. Perkins, his new ally, was at the station to see us off. After paying his respects, and reminding me of the memorable days in which he had filled my young mind with the lore drawn from his own deep stores of learning, he turned to Roger. "I wish you a pleasant journey, Mr. Roger," he said. "I never thought to see *you* travelling by one of these fly-away contrivances, but wonders never cease in this world. I wish you safely at your journey's end. I wish you a pleasant and a safe journey, Mr. Roger," he concluded, with a dismal emphasis on the adjectives, which implied that, however kind his wishes might be, his expectations were of a much more doleful and gloomy character. For the first fifty miles of the journey poor Roger was in a woeful state of fear. Whenever we

passed under a bridge, or travelled through a deep cutting, to say nothing of tunnels, Roger clung to the seat of the carriage and groaned aloud. By degrees he grew more accustomed to the new mode of travelling, but I think he never left his beads out of his hands during the whole journey, and when we arrived safely at our destination I am pretty sure that Roger was considerably astonished, and, I fancy, somewhat disappointed at the unexpected result.

I had secured a commodious and pretty cottage in the suburbs of London, sufficiently removed from the city to afford my Pet the advantages of pure air, and yet near enough to place me within easy reach of my wards. It was, as I have already said, solely on their account that I had come to town. As Sir Lionel had vouchsafed no answer to my communication, it was evident that he intended to keep his word, and that they had nothing to expect from him. I can truly say that I was in a very perplexing position. Except a little ready money which my poor friend had left at his death, and which was fast melting away, they were utterly unprovided for. And yet, what was to be done? I could easily have spared from my income sufficient to support them, if not in luxury, at least in simple comfort, until the advent of those better days which must necessarily, sooner or later, shine upon them. But how could I offer them pecuniary aid? If I offered it in the shape of a

loan, such a course of proceeding would imply an evident calculation on the death of Sir Lionel, which would have been as repugnant to them as to me, and as far from their thoughts as from mine. Besides, Sir Lionel might live for many years to come, and I was quite certain that, although they might, perhaps, in an extremity, be induced to accept some temporary assistance from me, they would never consent to become my permanent pensioners. I could not offer them money, pure and simple, without offending that fine sense of honour and that sensitive delicacy which, in truth, made them what they were. And yet, I asked myself again and again, what was to be done? In London, less than anywhere else, can people live upon nothing; and yet, so far as I could see, this was what they were fast coming to. If they would only take some of my money, for which I had no use, and which was lying idle in the bank, I said over and over again to myself, all would be well. But, I knew well enough that they wouldn't take it; and, hence, with all the heart and all the will in the world to do my very utmost for those who were so dear to me by many and sacred ties, I felt utterly impotent to be of any real assistance to them; a feeling which, I do assure you, made me very wretched and very unhappy.

My perplexities were cleared away, and my difficulties were solved by my dear boy, in a manner which I did not expect; and yet, one

which I might have expected—one perfectly in keeping with his truthful and noble nature. He came out to see me one day, and after some conversation on indifferent matters, he suddenly said to me in his frank, manly, truthful way: “tell me, guardian, is it not high time that I began to think of doing something?”

“Began to think of doing something, my dear boy,” I answered, pretending to misunderstand him. “What do you mean?”

“To do something for a living,” he said quickly, and with ever such a little tremor in his voice. “You know, guardian, there are three of us, and we can’t live on air, and yet so far as I can see, we shall have nothing else but this very unsubstantial means of subsistence shortly, unless I make out something to do. Ethel talks about going out as a governess; but I will never stand that,” he continued, with that honest flush in his face which made him so handsome to my eyes; “as long as I can prevent it. I don’t know that I am very able, but I am very willing, guardian, and it will be hard if I can’t meet with something or other that will suit me, and give us the simple means of support. We can live very plainly, you know; but I do think, so long as we can cling together any way at all, we ought not to be separated; and, as to Ethel’s going out as a governess, or my poor mother’s attempting to put into execution the thousand-and-one schemes which occupy her mind, I will never stand that. I know

very well that I can support us all, if I can only get something to do. That is the difficulty, dear guardian—if I can only get something to do.”

“My dear boy,” I answered, deeply moved by his honest earnestness; “it is very painful to me to hear you talk in this way. You know that I am very rich,” I went on, with a little exaggeration, which I hope will not come very heavily against me on the great accounting day, “and if you will only allow me to lend you——”

“Stop! dear guardian,” he cried quickly, coming over to me and taking my hand, which he tried to kiss. “You have done more for us,” he continued, with an exaggeration vastly greater than that of which I had been guilty, “than we can repay. You are ever showering down your kindnesses upon us. I don’t know what we should have done without you,” and he made another attempt to kiss my hand; “but I cannot allow even you to speak of such a thing to me. There are some things which no man should allow another to do for him or his, so long as there is any chance of his being able to do them himself. Don’t be angry with me, guardian. My tongue is rough, perhaps, but my heart is warm—my heart is very warm—and it feels your goodness more than my lips will let me say. But this thing neither can, nor ought to be. Do I speak the truth, dear guardian? Tell me, please, do I speak the truth?”

“Yes, my boy,” I answered. “God bless your

honest heart, you speak the truth. There are some things which no man should allow another to do for him or his. It is an old-fashioned truth, perhaps, but it is none the less true on that account, or less worthy of an honest man."

There was silence between us for a moment or two, and then he spoke again. "But, guardian, you know," he resumed, "about my doing something. I am afraid my Latin and Greek won't be of much use to me, unless I go out as a tutor, and I think I can scarcely make up my mind to do that. I have been thinking," he went on with touching simplicity and earnestness, "that if I could get into a bank or a merchant's office, it would be the best thing and the most lucrative. I daresay I shouldn't be very quick at accounts at first, but I would do my best, guardian, I would do my very best."

"But my dear boy," I answered, "have you thought of the drudgery of such a life as this. Fancy leaving your classics and your poetry to be shut up in a dingy office the long day through. I think you have scarcely realized the terrible change which this life will be to you, and I am afraid, nay I am certain, that you will not like it."

"It is not a matter of likes or of dislikes," he answered, without a moment's hesitation. "It is simply a matter of duty, dear guardian; and, unless my heart deceives me strangely, I think I could, with God's help, struggle through a harder trial than this is likely to be. I think, too, that I

have realized it pretty well, for I have been turning it over in my mind almost night and day for the last month or two, and I don't see anything in it to frighten me from the attempt. My dear father," he continued, as the tears rushed into his eyes, "struggled through much more grievous trials than this is likely to be to me; and I trust, although I shall never be such a man as my father was, that I am my father's son. I think, guardian, that I can do for my mother and Ethel what my father did for us all. If I don't do it as well, and if I don't succeed as he did, I can at least make the attempt. That attempt, with God's assistance, I will surely make. Will you help me, dear guardian—will you help me for my father's sake?"

"O my dear boy," I answered, I wish that I could help you as you deserve. For your father's sake, no less than for your own, such help as I can give you, I will give with all my heart and soul. Only let me have a day or two to think of this."

We said no more on the matter at that time, but he left me with a virtual understanding between us, that, if I approved of his scheme, I would aid him in his endeavours to enter some office. After turning it over in my mind, I came to the conclusion that, painful as it might be, unnecessary as it surely ought to have been, this scheme was the best that we could adopt under the circumstances. I had more than enough of

influence to procure him such a situation as the one he sought, and, in less than a month from our interview, my dear boy was duly installed in one of the leading city banks.

And, so, some months passed rapidly and not unhappily away; and we gradually settled down to our London life. Roger lived in a chronic state of warfare with all the tradesmen round about, in his zealous and well-meant, but, I must confess, on the whole, rather unnecessary efforts to procure us what he called "a mouthful o' wholesome victuals." Roger's abuse of what he persisted in stigmatizing as "water bewitched" was so violent, that, in the end, none of the vendors of that delectable article would condescend to supply us with it any longer, and the "milk difficulty" was eventually solved by the transportation of a real Yorkshire cow from her native pastures to London; a solution which, as we had a nice paddock attached to our cottage, and as the old servant whom we had brought with us from Yorkshire undertook to manage our little dairy, I was not sorry to adopt for more reasons than one.

Although I could not flatter myself that my little child grew any stronger, or more robust, still, he did not suffer in his health from the change, whilst in some respects that change was useful to him. Ethel and her mother lavished upon my helpless child that tender love and that nameless sympathy which seem to find their fullest and most perfect development in the

woman's heart alone. Of course they could never love him as I did, the one poor lamb of my lonely fold, and yet they were able to do many things for him which never entered into my mind, and of which I never thought, though he was the constant object of my waking thoughts and of my nightly dreams. They were able to do much for him which his mother might have done; much, which, spite of all my watchful love and care had never been done for him; simply because he was a motherless child. The tender love, the gentle care, the woman's delicate sympathy, which they lavished on my feeble crippled boy were priceless in their value to me then. The memory of them is more than priceless in its value to me now.

It was but natural that my child should, in turn, take to his new friends with a warmth and an ardour which at times awakened in my breast a feeling near akin to jealousy. You see, he was so dear above all price to me—he was so wound around the deepest and most tender affections of my soul—the possession of his undivided love was a treasure of such infinite worth in my estimation, that I could scarcely bear to see him spend even the lightest part of it upon another. And, yet, in truth, I had no reason to be jealous, no reason to dread the loss of the treasure which I prized so highly. On those occasions when they came out to see us, as surely as my Pet responded to their love by those little demonstrations which I have said almost awakened my jealousy, I was so

unreasonable and sensitive on this point, so surely when they had gone, would he, perhaps half-divining what was passing in my mind, turn to me again with more than ordinary manifestations of love in his winning childish ways; with a closer clinging of his little arms, with a fonder pressure of his pure young lips, as if he sought by these innocent marks of his deep true love to assure me that there was no other being on earth who could ever be to him or to me what he and I were to each other—all in all, more than all the world beside.

I think he took to Marmaduke almost more than even to Ethel or her mother. Marmaduke was fighting his hard fight, and doing his duty, like a true and a brave man. He could not conceal from me, in fact I think he was too honest to attempt to do so, that his struggle was a sharp one. But, like a true man, he thought more of his duty than of his Norman blood; and if he found his duties hard and dry to his highly educated and poetical cast of mind, if he found the manners and the tastes of those amongst whom his daily life was laid uncongenial to his own and distasteful to him, he never allowed one or the other to draw him aside, even by a hair's breadth, from the line of duty which he had marked out for himself; but, with a courage that never flinched, with a resolution that was never shaken, he walked it, bravely, truly, and cheerfully, as if it had been strewn with the brightest flowers of happiness and prosperity.

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My little child used to look anxiously forward to the holidays which Marmaduke and his mother and sister were accustomed to spend with us. Then we kept high festival, and these were some of the happiest days which blessed this portion of my life. As I write, they come back vividly before my eyes. I see Marmaduke, so noble in the beauty and strength of his early manhood, careering with my child upon his shoulders round and round our little meadow, to the evident astonishment of our Yorkshire cow, which cannot understand this invasion of her territory. I hear my little child crowing with delight. The sound of his happy laugh rings for a moment in my ears; and, then, my eyes grow suddenly dim; the sounds of laughter die away and are lost in the mysterious echoes of the irrevocable Past; the happy scene fades from my sight, and leaves me face to face with a Present at which I do not repine, but a Present which perchance I could scarcely bear if it were not lightened by the memories of the happy Past, and sustained by the hopes and expectations of a still more blissful Future.

* And, thus, some months sped happily away—all too happily for me—not less happily for them, perhaps, because they were months of patient endurance, and of duty nobly and truly done. Then, in the wise Providence of God, a dark and heavy cloud swept once more across our lives—a cloud which we never perceived in the lowering sky

until the storm came crashing down with sudden fury upon our heads—a cloud so dark that we looked in vain for the ray of light which, sooner or later, creeps slowly and gently up to tell that the horizon already begins to clear—a tempest so fierce that we looked in vain for the silver lining which the eye of hope is ever fain to discern behind the darkest cloud that ever swept relentlessly across the chequered path of human life.

CHAPTER X.

FOREBODINGS.

THE second spring which we spent in London was very harsh and cold, and it affected rather seriously at least two members of my little household. Although a mere stranger, perhaps, might not have noticed it, it seemed to me, in that ceaseless anxiety and watchful care which were never absent from me, that my little child grew visibly weaker and more fragile, drooping under the influence of the biting easterly blasts, like some fair plant far too tender and sensitive for the climate in which it finds itself placed. He grew more quiet and reserved, more quaint and old fashioned in his ways, more earnest in his clinging love to me. We nursed him tenderly, and guarded him as carefully as ever we were able through the trying season, hoping and longing for the cheerful summer suns which were, as we fondly trusted, to make him stronger than ever; but there were times when an indefinable dread seized upon my soul; when, in spite of all my fortitude, and all my stern determination to hope and believe the best, I shrank trembling and affrighted

from the awful vision which rose before my eyes, and chilled my very heart with a terrible fear of that indefinable something, whose coming presence seemed to grow more tangible every day, more remorseless in its steady advance, more cruel in its haste to execute the irrevocable decree which, perchance, had already gone forth.

Poor old Roger, too, began to break very fast. He had been up to this time a wonderfully hale and hearty old man, retaining his health and vigour long after the period up to which man's strength is usually granted to him; but he had been failing more or less ever since we came to London, and the severe and trying weather of which I have spoken told upon him sadly. Like many who have retained their strength and vigour up to an unusual period, when once he began to break, he seemed to break all the more rapidly on this very account. Never having known sickness, it was almost impossible to induce him to adopt any of those remedies which might be of real service to him now that he really needed them; and he was so impatient of restraint, chafing under his ailments, and the sufferings which they entailed upon him, that it was very difficult indeed to manage the poor old man, and to oblige him to take that care of himself which had become absolutely necessary. In fact, my influence over him in this matter was of no avail, and it was only by skilfully employing the assistance of my little child that Roger could be managed at all.

He would meet my strongest assertions about his growing weakness with sturdy contradiction, and my reasoning on the matter was simply powerless before the "bits of his mind" and the "tastes of his tongue" with which he favoured me in return. It was only when our Pet interfered and cried out, "O now, Roger, you know you must do what you are told; I shall be very angry if you do not do as papa tells you, and I will never sit upon your knee again," that Roger was vanquished, and became as meek and as tractable as the little child whose lightest word had such an influence over the faithful and true old man.

But these foreshadowings of troubles to come, were, for some space, at least, lost sight of in the storm which just at this time broke upon us. I usually saw Marmaduke once or twice a week. As an ordinary rule he spent some part of each Sunday with us in the country; and, in addition to this, when the days were long, and the weather fine, he often walked out and passed an hour or two with us in the evening when his daily work was done. He had stuck to his distasteful duty like a true and a brave man; and, thanks to his own patient perseverance, and the influence which I was able to bring to bear upon the heads of the house, was in the receipt of a salary which not only enabled him to keep Ethel at home, but to support both her and his mother, if not in luxury, at least in comfort. Several times lately, however, when he had come out to see us, I had

noticed an unusual appearance of melancholy and anxiety upon his open countenance. It required some little pressure on my part before he could be prevailed upon to tell me what was amiss; but at length he one evening opened his mind to me.

“We are all greatly annoyed at the bank,” he said, “and we are the more annoyed because we don’t know what to do in the case. For some time past it seems that large sums of money have been missing. The head of the house came to us the other day and told us this. He said that whilst he could not, and did not, suspect any of us, they thought it only right that we should know what was going on, inasmuch as we were all intimately concerned in the discovery of the thief. He did not give us any further particulars, but concluded by saying, that the firm relied upon us with confidence to assist them to the utmost in this most unpleasant matter. Now, you know, dear guardian, this is a most annoying business; and for the last few days I frankly confess that I have been scarcely able either to eat or sleep. The suspicion naturally falls upon each and every one of us, and I would give all I possess, and a great deal more if I had it,” he concluded, “if this mystery were unraveled, and the guilty one brought to justice.”

It did not, of course, require much argument to prove to me how unpleasant and annoying this state of affairs must necessarily be to a person of

such high principles, and of such a sensitive nature, as my dear boy. Still, I encouraged him as best I could, told him that doubtless the cloud would soon blow over, and endeavoured to persuade him not to allow this matter to weigh upon his mind, or to disturb his peace, since it must be evident to all that not a breath of suspicion could by any chance rest upon him.

My boy promised to take my advice, but I was concerned to see, as we shook hands, that the cloud still rested as heavily as ever upon his brow, and that he was gloomy and depressed to an extent which made me very uneasy. When the time at which he usually left us to return to the city arrived he seemed strangely loath and unwilling to go. The clock had struck nine, and yet he sat on, holding my little child upon his knee, and stroking his hair with a strange and wistful tenderness in his eyes and in the very motion of his hands. My little child saw that something was amiss and clung more closely than usual to his friend. I saw him more than once put up his hands and draw Marmaduke's face down to his. I heard him more than once whispering into his friend's ear his anxious enquiries as to what was wrong. "What is it, 'Duke, dear," I heard him say, "oh! what can be the matter?" But, Marmaduke only pressed the child closer to his breast, and kissed away the tears that were coursing down his sorrowful little face. Even when, at last, he had risen to depart, he lingered

strangely about the room; and held my child as if he would never let him go. "Good bye, Arty, darling," he said over and over again, "Good bye, my darling boy;" and, yet, he only drew the child more warmly to his heart. At length, the child having discovered that there were tears upon the face of his friend, burst out into such a fit of weeping and of sorrowful lamentation that I was fain to hasten Marmaduke out of the room and get him away. As we parted at the door of my house he took both my hands in his, which was very unusual with him, for, although of a warm and impulsive nature he was not usually demonstrative, and held them a long time in his own. "I don't know what is the matter with me to-night, dear guardian," he said, his voice beginning to choke with sobs, "but, I am strangely and miserably depressed. I think something terrible must be going to happen to me. I never felt such an oppression upon my heart in all my life."

"My dear, dear boy," I answered, wringing his hands, and speaking as cheerfully as ever I could, "you allow this matter to weigh upon your mind until it is rendering you quite wretched. Take courage, be a man, trust in God, and never fear all will be well."

Even after I thought he had gone I heard his voice calling to me from the bottom of our little garden. I went down, and as soon as I got up to him he seized hold of my hands once more. "O guardian," he cried, turning away his head

to hide the tears which he was ashamed to let me see, his voice all broken up with sobs the while, "O guardian, I want to ask you to make Arty say his prayers for me to-night. If there be any misfortune hanging over me the prayers of that innocent child will move the Almighty God to bring me clear of it. God only knows how I love that little child," he cried with a sudden burst of emotion which shook him like an aspen leaf. "God only knows how much I rely upon his innocent prayers. God only knows whether I shall ever see his little face again."

A moment more, and he was gone. It was my turn to be moved now, and, although I could not but consider his forebodings without any real foundation, and his depression and melancholy excessive under the circumstances, still, as I stood at the gate of my garden watching him as he walked hurriedly towards London, I prayed my God with all my might and main to bring comfort to his troubled soul, and to ward far off from this true and noble hearted boy even the first faint glimmerings of adversity greater than that which he already knew, or troubles deeper than those which he had already seen.

Altogether, it had been a melancholy scene. When I returned to my house I found my little child crying as if his heart were broken, and refusing all the efforts of Roger to comfort him. "What is the matter with 'Duke, Papa," he cried, as soon as he saw me. "Oh! what is the matter

with my poor, poor Duke," and I was not able to pacify him until I had told him of the request which Marmaduke had made. Then, as well as he was able for his bodily affliction, he knelt down at my knees, and folding his little hands prayed his simple, childish, innocent prayers to God for his dear Papa and for his poor 'Duke. As I listened to the feeble voice of my little child, I knew in my heart of hearts that it had gone up to the throne of God with a strength in its tones which a thousand cathedral choirs could never have given to it—with a force in its supplication which might be as potent as an angel's prayer—with a pleading in its wailing accents which must be ineffably persuasive to the dear heart of God; to the dear heart of Him who took them on His sacred knees, who laid His blessed hand upon their innocent heads, and who bade those who would have kept them back to suffer little children to come unto Him, for, that of such was the kingdom of heaven.

It was late before I retired to rest after this distressing evening. I was just beginning to dose off when a loud knocking at the door of my house suddenly recalled me to consciousness. I knew at once that something was wrong. With an anxious and a beating heart I hurried on my clothes, and hastened down to the door. Roger had been there before me and had opened it. My heart gave one great leap within my breast, and my knees trembled till I could scarcely stand,

as my eyes fell upon the figure of a policeman who stood respectfully, hat in hand, evidently waiting my approach. With a terrible foreboding of some great impending evil I seized his arm and eagerly enquired his business with me at this untimely hour of the night.

Alas and alas, for the business which had brought him to my peaceful and my happy home! He told me that he had been sent to me by Mrs. Lionel Ravenshale, and this was the news he brought me. My boy, Marmaduke—he whom I had learnt to look upon as the very incarnation of everything that was pure, noble, honest and true—he who had borne his trials with such a manly dignity and grace—he whom I had learnt to love almost as if he were my own child—he upon whose honour and truth I would have staked my life—he who had become so dear to me—as much for his own as for his father's sake—he, the only support of his mother and she a widow—he, the Heir of Ravenshale, of all its honours and all its possessions, had been arrested on the charge of stealing a bank note for £100 from the office of his employers.

CHAPTER XI.

COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.

It was but too true. As we hurried along in the darkness of the night towards London, I gathered from my conductor the leading features of this most distressing case. All that he knew was that, after the closing of the bank that evening, the police had been suddenly summoned to the house. An experienced detective had, at the request of the heads of the firm, been sent with the party. On their arrival at the bank, the heads of the house had been closeted with the detective officer for a short time. What had transpired at this interview, of course, my companion did not know. He only knew that at its termination there had been a rigorous search of all the desks of the clerks employed by the firm. For some time this search had been fruitless; but, at length, a note for £100 had been discovered, carefully hidden away, in the desk of Marmaduke Ravenshale. Thereupon a party of police had been despatched to the house where Marmaduke dwelt with his mother and sister, and had arrested him on a charge of theft, when he returned home after his visit to me on that memorable evening. My conductor, who had

formed one of the party, had, at the request of my poor boy's mother, come to inform me of the sad state of affairs at their house, and to beg of me to hasten to them as soon as possible.

This was all the information he could give me; but what he knew he told me, openly and without reserve, and with many expressions of commiseration for the prisoner's mother and sister.

I suppose a policeman sees so much of the evil side of human nature, that he naturally comes to look upon every suspected person as guilty, until he has been formally acquitted of whatever crime may be laid to his charge, by the judge and jury who have to decide upon his case. Hence I dare say it was that my conductor, whilst he was profuse in his expressions of commiseration for the mother and sister of my poor boy, did not seem to entertain the least doubt about the guilt of the accused. Now, I had such an intimate conviction of the honour, and the truth of Marmaduke Ravenshale—I had such an unwavering belief in his justice and integrity—that if all the policemen in Great Britain and Ireland had come to me and sworn that my boy had done this evil thing I would not have believed them. Inexplicable as the matter appeared to me—circumstantial as was the statement of my conductor—I am proud to remember, and I cherish it as one of the dearest recollections of my life, that my faith in my boy never wavered, even to the extent of a momentary

doubt. Hence, as we hurried along, I chafed under the remarks of my conductor, and I grew angry with him for what after all was, perhaps, but a natural instinct, if not of his nature at least of his profession. I had, however, restraint enough over myself, even in my anger, to see how unreasonable it would be to quarrel with him on this matter, but not enough to conceal from him the irritation and annoyance which his language caused me. He soon noticed this, and apologised to me in his short, blunt way: "I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, sir," he said, "and I beg your pardon for it. I am sure I wish the young gentleman safely out of it; but, for all that, it is an ugly case—a very ugly case."

I made no answer; and we hurried on in silence for the rest of the way. As I turned the matter over in my mind, as clearly as the great trouble which seized upon me would allow, I was obliged to admit that it looked very dark and gloomy. Nay more, I was obliged to confess that, in the light of the scanty information which I possessed, it seemed simply inexplicable. But, as I have just said, it never entered into my mind to believe or to think that he was guilty. I thought that there was some terrible mistake, or some fearful accident—some mistake, which, indeed, might never be cleared up—some accident which might involve my boy in utter and hopeless ruin; but I thought at the same time, clenching my very hands in the sternness and fierceness of my angry

conviction, that neither judge nor jury, lawyer nor policeman, should ever make me believe that Marmaduke Ravenshale was either a liar or a thief.

If I had ever entertained a doubt which—thank God, I never did—about his innocence; that doubt would have been effectually cleared up by the first glance which I got at the face of my boy in this his great trouble. When we had arrived and I entered the room in which they were all assembled, my first glance fell upon him. He was standing in the middle of the floor, pale indeed as death, but with his head thrown proudly back, and with such an expression of defiant honour, and of stainless integrity, upon his noble face—with such a light of unsullied truth shining out of the depths of his dark blue eyes, as could belong to none but an honest man. Even in the hurry and the trepidation of a moment such as that, I marked that as he saw me enter, an expression of grievous trouble passed across his face, and his eyes met mine with a world of yearning doubt, and of anxious, searching, painful expectation, in their look. I did not give him time to take a second look. I did not leave him space to entertain a second doubt about the fulness of my love for him, my unwavering and unbroken confidence in his honour and his truth; but, in the fulness of that love and that unbroken confidence, I ran over with hasty steps to where he stood, and throwing my arms around him drew him closely to my

breast. As he felt the tender and assuring pressure of my arms, and knew that my belief in his honour and his truth was untainted and unchanged, his breast began to heave as it lay against my own; the fountains of his heart began to break up and to overflow, and for some brief space he forgot the strength of his manhood in the depths of his love—the might of his honour in the whisperings of his simple and his grateful heart; and he wept upon my shoulder, even as his father had done on one well-remembered night—a night, the memory of which came flashing across my mind once more, as I drew this dear boy still closer to my breast, and vowed in my heart of hearts that I would stand to him to the very last; that, the darker the cloud, the brighter should be my trusting confidence and love; that I would be to him more earnestly, more faithfully, more truly in this his great trouble, what I had ever striven to be since the first moment he had been committed to my care, all that his father might have been to him.

Thus much, without egotism or empty boasting, but in simple duty and in honest truth, I can and think it right to say for myself and for this dear boy, in this sad and momentous crisis of his life.

For a few moments there was a solemn silence which neither of us sought to break. The first few whispered words which he spoke were so like himself, so indicative of the simple faith and the

loyal affection and truth which made him the noble man he was, that they endeared him to me more than ever, if that could be.

“Did Arty say his prayers for me to-night,” was all he said. “Did Arty pray to God for me, dear guardian.”

I wrung his hand in reply, for, to tell the truth, I was afraid to trust my tongue to speak.

A moment more, and then he raised his head from my shoulder and looked his fate, whatever that might be, sternly, unflinchingly, and defiantly in the face.

And I, too, now looked round the room and took more careful note of the state of affairs than I had yet done. There were several police officers present, but they stood respectfully on one side until the first meeting between me and my poor boy was over, and did not seek to interfere. With the same consideration, as I afterwards learnt, they had delayed to remove their prisoner until my arrival.

Close to his elbow stood his mother and sister. Weaker woman than they would, in circumstances such as these, have broken out into sobs and cries, and no one would have blamed or spoken harshly of them for doing so. But neither Mrs. Lionel nor her daughter was a woman of this stamp. They were too brave and strong; they were too jealous of his honour and too sensitive of his fair fame; they had too deep a conviction—a conviction which no power on earth could have

weakened or destroyed—of his integrity and his truth; above all, their love and their consideration for him were too infinite in their tenderness to allow them to add one tittle to his pain, or to seem to cast even a passing shadow of doubt upon his name by tear or sob of theirs. Hence, they stood at his elbow, as calm in the sternness of their self-reliance, as proud in their honour, as defiant in their integrity, as he whom they sought to encourage and sustain. Nay, they did not even break down when the officer respectfully but firmly intimated that the time had arrived for the removal of the prisoner. His mother took him in her arms—kissed him once, twice, thrice—looked up proudly and with unwavering confidence into his face, but, without a tear in her eye or a quiver of her lip to show that she either doubted of his truth or trembled for his strength. It was only when he had gone and I was left alone with them, that the forced restraint gave way; that the mother's heart asserted its prerogative—the prerogative to weep and wail, as a mother only can, when sorrow, nameless and infinite, has fallen upon her only son. But, even as she had fought so violently with herself, that she might not add to the trials of her son, so now did Ethel strive, no less nobly, no less generously, no less successfully, that, overcoming herself, she might minister to the mother who stood in such grievous need of consolation and support. They were true, noble, valiant women; worthy of the name they bore;

worthy of the reward which awaited them, no less than of the abundant help and strength which God, in his tender mercy, poured down upon them in this sore strait.

And, now, I daresay I might, if I were so disposed, spin out this painful incident in the life of this dear boy to a great length, and make it form a very sensational portion of this simple narrative. But I shall do neither the one nor the other. The subject is too painful to me, even in its slightest detail, dealing as it does with matters infinitely repugnant to every instinct of my nature and to every feeling of my heart, to allow me to speak of it except in the very slightest manner and in the fewest possible words. It is a matter which I cannot altogether pass by, and which, strive as I may, I shall not be able to avoid treating at some length; but, you may be quite certain, that I shall strive to be as brief and as little sensational as ever I am able.

Marmaduke was brought before a police magistrate the morning after his arrest, and was formally charged with the theft of the bank note which had been found in his desk. I need scarcely say that I was by his side to afford him whatever strength and support might come to him from my presence; and now, for the first time, I learnt all the particulars of the case.

The head of the house having been sworn, deposed, that for some time past various sums of money had been missing from the bank, but that

all their efforts had been unavailing to discover the thief. He went on to say that on the making up of the accounts on the previous Saturday there was a deficit of £100: that they had received information on Monday morning, recommending them to take certain steps in regard to the missing money that same evening: that acting on this information they had requested the attendance of the police at the time pointed out: that the police had instituted a rigorous search which for some time proved quite fruitless, until, at last, a note for £100 had been discovered hidden away in a corner of the desk used by the prisoner: that, the prisoner had denied all knowledge of the note and of the manner in which it had come into his desk, although the desk was locked and the key in his own possession: that, under these circumstances, although with the utmost reluctance, sorrow, and astonishment, he had been obliged in justice to the firm which he represented, and to the persons whom he employed, to leave the matter in the hands of the police. This concluded his evidence.

The police officer having sworn to the finding of the note, the prisoner, after having been cautioned by the magistrate that any statement which he made might be used against him, was asked in the usual manner whether he had anything to say to the charge.

For a moment the hot blood rushed into his face, and his lip curled with unutterable scorn.

But with a great effort he mastered himself, and keeping down the indignation that was swelling within his breast, looked proudly, but not insolently; confidently, but not defiantly; round the court. Then, as the flush passed away from his face, leaving him calm and pale, he answered in a low, firm voice:

“No; I have nothing to say, save that I am innocent of this charge. As there is a God in Heaven,” he added, raising his right hand on high as he spoke, “I know nothing of this thing. I did not know this note was in my desk. I know not how it came there. If I were to appear before the judgment seat of God the next instant, I would repeat that I am innocent of this charge. This is all I have to say.”

The magistrates consulted together for a few moments, and then announced their decision:

Committed for trial!

I stood up and offered bail to any amount; and again they held a brief consultation together.

Bail refused!

For a moment I trembled for my boy—trembled for his resolution and his strength, but I had no need to fear for him. As he turned round ere he left the dock, and took my hand in both his own, it filled my sorrowing heart with consolation to see how calm, how proudly confident, how utterly unmoved he looked. With the same proud look of conscious innocence mantling on his noble face, with the same unsullied light

of honour and truth beaming out of his eyes, with the same proud smile curling on his lip, he turned away and gave himself into the hands of those who were waiting to lead him to his lonely cell.

CHAPTER XII.

TRUE TO THE LAST.

I HAD enough upon my hands now, you may be quite sure. First, there were the sorrow-stricken women to be comforted and consoled; then, there was my poor boy to be sustained, encouraged, and strengthened; and, lastly, there were the necessary preparations for his approaching trial to be made.

On one point I was quite determined, viz., that, wherever the means might come from, Marmaduke must have, in this his trial and difficulty, the first legal advice which money could procure, and the bar afford. It seemed to me, however, that it was my duty before taking any steps towards the preparation for his defence, to consult his grandfather, Sir Lionel Ravenshale, as it had seemed to me my duty to do on a former occasion, which my readers doubtless recollect—a duty which, as they will also recollect, I had discharged with such fruitless and unsatisfactory results.

Hence, once more, with, I may frankly confess, but slight if any hopes of succeeding in my mission; but, simply from a feeling of duty, I

took my way to Ravenshale, and sought an interview with its master.

The old place looked more lonely, more deserted, more cold and chilling, than it had even done when last I approached it. *Then*, the noble avenue and the grounds immediately about the Hall had appeared trim and well-kept. *Now*, everything was in disorder and neglected; the grass growing on the avenue, and the tangled weeds flourishing up to the very steps which led to the grand entrance to the Hall, showing the absence of the master's eye, proving with mute and painful eloquence, far more effective than any words, that he who was lord of this vast domain had either become unable to attend to its due keeping; or, what was more likely, had grown careless of its beauty, and indifferent to its attractions.

A silence as of death reigned around the place, and the bell which I rang, pealed discordantly, as it seemed to me, through the empty house; awaking a thousand echoes which jarred upon the ear as they proclaimed with a thousand tongues that desolation, misery, silent despair, hopeless and fruitless sorrow, held their sway, unquestioned and uncontrolled, within the walls which rang responsive and with such fitful sounds of wailing and regret to the unaccustomed peal. Of course, it may have been all fancy, but such at least were the impressions which flitted through my mind, as I stood waiting for admittance to the lonely house.

A few moments, and I stood once more, and for the last time upon earth, in the presence of Sir Lionel Ravenshale. It was little more than two years since I had seen him last—since I had come down to plead with him for the widow and the children of his own only son, and had been dismissed almost unheard, with my prayer utterly and sternly refused, from his door.

If he had been my greatest enemy, and if I could have forgotten my duty as a Christian to indulge in the pagan virtue of revenge, I could not have desired swifter, speedier, more crushing retribution, than had fallen upon this miserable man. He had crushed his household gods with the reckless stamp of his own proud heel—in the strength of his own mad wicked will he had driven his child, and his child's children, from his side—and now he was sinking, day by day, almost hour by hour, into the grave that was yawning in its open horror close beneath his feet; and there was no hand save that of the careless and indifferent menial to smooth his pillow or to minister to his wants; there was no eye to watch with loving care, with longing, yearning, never-failing solicitude, his waning strength; no eye to drop a tear upon his sad cold face when he had gone; no voice to falter and break down as it strove to pray eternal rest upon his soul.

Ah me! was it for this that the broken, gibbering, hollow-faced old man, who was unable to rise from his seat as I entered the room, and who had

scarcely intelligence enough left to him to understand the full bearings of the case I put before him—oh! was it for this, I say, that he had guarded the foul skeleton in the closet with such jealous and unsleeping care; was it to reap such a whirlwind as this that he had sown the storm with such a prodigal and lavish hand?

Pardon me, reader, if I pass over this painful scene as briefly as I can. I made him understand the nature of the case, and I told him in plain, but, I hope, not harsh or unkind words, that I considered it to be his duty to furnish the funds for the defence of his grandson and his heir.

He only replied to me by impotent denunciations, and by complaints that, I think, were wicked, but that were surely pitiful and sad in their maudlin feebleness and unreason. "They have ruined me," he shrieked in his shrill and broken voice. "They have disgraced me and my name—a set of shameless beggars. I knew they would do it. I knew they would disgrace me. To think" he went on, "that one who bears my name should be a liar and a thief. I curse the day he was born. I curse the day he brought disgrace upon my spotless name, and I will not give a penny—no—not even to save him from the hangman's rope."

"Shame on you, Sir Lionel Ravenshale," I cried, interrupting his wicked speech, and forgetting all my pity for him in the torrent

of righteous indignation which filled my soul. "Shame on you! Shame on you, you senseless, wicked, unrelenting man! Is it not enough for you that you hounded on your only son to death? Is it not enough for you that you allowed your own child, your own flesh and blood, to starve to death whilst you were rolling in countless wealth and in luxurious abundance? Is it not enough for you that you did all this and a thousand times more, but you must heap your wicked slander upon the children of him who is dead and gone, and asperse with your foul tongue as brave and true a boy as ever bore your boasted name, and who would not be in the cruel position in which he is now placed if you had done your duty as a Christian and a man? Shame upon you," I went on as he cowered in his chair before me, "you may well hide your head, for I wonder how you dare to look an honest man in the face! I wonder how you dare to bend your knee to God! I wonder how you dare to lay your head upon your pillow! Shame upon you, Sir Lionel Ravenshale, and may God soften your hard and unforgiving heart!"

"I tell you they have disgraced me," he repeated again and again, his voice growing weaker and weaker, but his face remaining as hard and unforgiving in its expression as ever. "They have degraded my name for ever and ever, and I will never forgive them. I will never acknowledge them as belonging to me or to my honoured race."

“Disgrace or no disgrace,” I cried, eager to bring this interview to a close—“disgrace or no disgrace, will you, or will you not, do your duty, and supply out of your useless wealth the means for the defence of your innocent and your noble-hearted child?”

“How dare you speak to me in such impertinent language,” he shrieked, endeavouring to rise from his chair, but falling helplessly back. “You are no gentleman to speak to a helpless old man in such insolent terms. Begone, or I will make my servants thrust you out of my house! Who are you, that you presume to speak to me of my duty?”

“I am your hapless son’s oldest, dearest, and truest friend,” I answered, calmly and quietly, for indeed all the anger had faded out of my heart by this time, leaving room for nothing but sorrow, and regret, and dismay, at the fearful spectacle before me. “I am the guardian of his son, who is now, by no fault of his, in such a terrible and dangerous strait. I have come to you simply from a sense of duty—a duty more painful to me than you can well imagine. I am sorry, Sir Lionel,” I went on, “if I have spoken too harshly or unkindly to you, but you tried me beyond my powers of endurance. If you knew this dear boy as I know him, you would not wonder at the expressions of anger and indignation into which you have surprised me. You would rather wonder at my patience and self-

restraint. And, now," I concluded, "I have done my duty, and again I ask you, Sir Lionel Ravenshalle, solemnly and before God, will you do yours?" "No! no!" he cried, "not a penny! I will not spend a penny of the Ravenshalle money to save a thief from the gallows. That is my answer! Go!"

I had to turn away for a moment or two and do hard battle with myself. When I felt that I could speak calmly, I turned to him again. "Sir Lionel," I said, "if any man but you had dared to utter such slanderous words in my hearing—if any man but you had dared to say in my presence that your grandson was a thief, I should have told him to his teeth that he was a base and wicked liar. I cannot say such words to you. I would not say them if I could. You are a very old man, and will soon stand face to face with God. I leave you to His judgment, and I pray Him to show you more mercy than you show to others, though they be your own flesh and blood. To that same just and merciful God I leave the vindication of this dear boy's unsullied truth and honour, and I have no fear for the ultimate result. I would for the sake of justice and of truth; still more for the sake of your own poor soul, that you had done this thing. If you will not—be it so. There are, thank God, a few of the old Farleye acres left yet; and if the last of them have to go to provide those means which you refuse, it will go with all my heart and soul, and with the

blessing of God upon it I neither fear nor doubt. Farewell," I said, offering him my hand, which he refused with a haughty and impatient gesture. "Farewell, Sir Lionel, and if we never meet again, I can only pray to God to bring you to happier and to better things. I think you will repent of this and wish it were undone. Whether or not, of this you may rest assured, that, so long as God grants me to live, the children of your only son will never want a father and a friend."

And, then, I turned away and left him there alone—alone with God and his own poor heart. I found my way out of the lonely house; but ere I left its precincts I sought the chapel where in days gone by my childish prayers had so often risen, as I humbly trust, to the throne of God. And, there, before the altar at which Lionel and I had so often prayed our childish prayers; before the altar at which we had together made our simple, holy, priceless first communion; I humbly bent my knees once more, and prayed with all my heart and soul—prayed my fervent though unworthy prayers—for the wretched, miserable, poor old man whose face I never saw again."

CHAPTER XIII.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

THE day appointed for Marmaduke's trial on the charge of theft rapidly approached. The most able barrister whom money could secure had undertaken his defence, and every preparation which his ingenuity or my affectionate interest could suggest had been made.

It was a great comfort to me to know that, after one or two interviews with my poor boy, the eminent lawyer who had undertaken his defence entertained no doubt of his innocence. But, as he candidly put it to me, and as I was forced to admit, it is one thing to be innocent, and another, and a very different thing, to be able to establish that innocence when it has been formally impugned. The British juryman is apt to be powerfully influenced by appearances, and appearances were decidedly against poor Marmaduke. Sergeant Carson entered into his case with an enthusiasm which I fancy the steady practical old lawyer seldom showed; but, whilst he assured me of his full and entire conviction of Marmaduke's innocence, and bade me be convinced that whatever legal skill and ingenuity could do would be done

to the utmost for my poor boy; he also cautioned me against being too confident of an acquittal, and recommended me to prepare his client for the worst, if, unhappily, the case should go against him.

Meanwhile, poor Marmaduke bore up bravely. Of course he grew pale and thin, the confinement telling visibly upon his health, but he never quailed in spirit, never flinched from the worst that might be before him, never ceased to bear himself like a man who was sustained by that dauntless spirit which is born alone of honour, of integrity, and of truth. If he ever faltered and grew weak, if he ever broke down for a moment or two, and had to turn his head away from me, it was only when he spoke of his mother, his sister, or my little child. But, even then, he soon recovered himself, for, as I have said, although most affectionate, he was not usually demonstrative. "Take them my best love," he infallibly said as he wrung my hand at parting, "and tell them, dear guardian, that they need not fear for me. Tell them, that, whatever happens, they may be quite sure I will bear myself like a man." Sometimes he would add: "Make Arty say his prayers for me. You know, guardian, I have great faith in Arty's prayers. Make that innocent child pray to God for me, and tell him that I would give all the world to be able to take him on my knees and kiss his pretty little face; that little face which, perhaps, I shall never see again till I see it in heaven."

His mother and sister bore up bravely too. It would be foolish and unnatural to say that they never broke down, never gave way to cries and tears. They were true and noble women, but, they were women, which they would not have been, if they could have passed through such a time and such a crisis as this without having their hearts wrung to their inmost core; without crying out in the force and agony of that fearful sorrow which carries death or madness in its stroke, unless the sufferer may find relief in tears and groans.

But, they never broke down before the eyes of men, not even before mine. They were too sensitive of his honour; they were too jealous of his fair fame; they were too proudly and too defiantly reliant on his unsullied innocence, to allow even me to see a tear in their eyes, or to hear a groan issue from the troubled breast; me, who knew them so well, who loved them so truly, who prized them so deeply.

But, there is a language which, though unspoken and without a name, is infinite in its eloquence and its power; and, when his widowed mother held my hand and raised her tearless eyes in speechless agony to my face; when his sister clung to my arm, and hid her fair young face upon my breast, I knew well enough what was in their poor sorrow-stricken hearts; I knew well enough the fierce nature of the fight which these poor women had to wage. I knew well enough how the lacerated hearts were bleeding all the

more cruelly for the calm outside; and, at such times, I was fain to hurry away from them, as quickly as might be, that so they might be free to weep those blessed tears which were at once the tokens of their true and faithful love, as they were the relief designed by God for the surcharged and afflicted soul. And, as I went my way, I should have been less than a man, if I had not raised my heart in humble supplication to my God, that he would deign to temper the storm to these poor feeble women; that he would deign to bring comfort and consolation to the hearts so sorely tried; that he would deign to nerve them to bear whatever might be in store for them. And I should have been still less a man if I could have looked forward, without shrinking and dismay, to that day not now far distant, when it might, perchance, be my cruel lot to bring to them that terrible news whose effects I feared to contemplate; that news which might rob the widowed mother of her only son, and tear the brother from the sister's side who prized him far beyond whatever else the world possessed for her.

But, I ever strove to hope the best. And, thus, with such patience as we might, with such resignation as we could summon up, above all with such fervent and unceasing prayer as only goes up to God from hearts so sorely tried as ours, we waited for the coming of that dreadful day which was to make us the happiest or most wretched of God's creatures.

It came at last; and judge and jury, counsel and police, spectators and officials were all in their places ready to begin. The court was crowded to excess, for the town had been filled for days past with the history of this strange affair. Rumour had exaggerated to a fabulous amount the value of the estate to which the prisoner was the sole heir. His youth, his noble handsome bearing, the hard fate to which he had been consigned; in a word, every thing concerning him, was in the mouths of all; and five minutes after the opening of the doors there was not a seat to be had in the court from which hundreds of eager applicants for admission were turned disappointedly away.

By the kindness of the officials I was allowed to take up a position quite close to the dock, so that I might be near the prisoner during the course of the trial. When the order was given to place him at the bar, there was a sudden movement amongst the vast assembly, and every head was eagerly turned in the direction whence he was to appear. As the door at the back of the dock opened, and he suddenly stood face to face with the crowded court, a hush that was painful in its very intensity, and then a loud murmur of pity and of sympathy, testified to the impression which he had already made upon those who had assembled to look upon him in his trouble.

He stepped up into that place of shame and ignominy with a proud and manly bearing, which, whilst it was confident and self-reliant, was modest

and becoming his position. As he laid his hand upon the front of the dock and looked slowly round the court, with that look of conscious innocence which had never left it mantling more and more upon his face, and with his head thrown a little back as was his wont, he might have defied the keenest eye there to discover the slightest quiver on his lip or the slightest sign of wavering or of weakness in the expression of his countenance. He was pale indeed, but it was the paleness of confinement and not of fear nor of doubt. As he glanced round the court and noted the crowds who had come together to gaze upon him in this the hour of his need and of his affliction, his face gradually assumed a sternness of expression which was very unusual to it, and his lip curled with a defiant pride, almost with a scorn, that was still less familiar to it. But, when his eyes fell upon me as I stood close below the dock, gazing up piteously into my poor boy's face, the hard stern look passed all away; the pleasant smile began to play upon the lips that but a moment before had worn such a different expression; the deep blue eyes began to beam with a wonderful look of confidence and of love; and as he bent down and took in his own the hands which I held up to him, the murmur which had risen when he first appeared broke out again, only more deeply and loudly than before, and the wail of women's voices began to be audibly heard in the hot and reeking court, so little used to echo with such sounds.

"Silence in the court!" cried the usher; "Silence in the court!"—but he had to cry more than once ere he succeeded in his purpose.

And then the business of the day began. As there were hardly any witnesses to be examined, it was generally understood that the proceedings would, in all probability, be concluded in one day. You will please to remark, courteous reader, that I do not propose to myself to give you a detailed account of these proceedings, nor of the exact order in which every thing occurred. The whole matter was so infinitely painful to me, and I was so confused during a part of the proceedings, that I neither wish nor propose to myself to do more than give you a very slight, though substantial account of them.

When, therefore, the jury had been impanelled and sworn, the clerk of the court rose, and, in a dry hard tone, proceeded to read the charge upon which the prisoner was to be tried. When he had done, the usual question was put: "What say you to the charge, prisoner at the bar, Guilty or not Guilty?"

The words had scarcely left the lips of him who put the question, ere the indignant answer was given.

"Not Guilty," he cried in a voice which rang, sharp and clear as the blast of a trumpet, through the crowded court; a voice whose every tone was thrilling with indignant denial of the foul crime laid to his charge; a voice which it seemed to me,

in my foolishness, must carry conviction to every being who listened to it; a voice which awoke once more the murmur and the wailing cry which the usher sought so officiously to put down.

After this, the counsel for the prosecution rose to state the charge. He was a small spare man, and although he was already at the head of his profession he could scarcely have been fifty years of age. There was a restless motion in his hands, which he continually moved hither and thither, that was very unpleasant and annoying to a looker-on. At least, I know that it fidgeted me and made me very uneasy. His voice was shrill and sharp, and I never met a man whose cross-examination of an adverse witness seemed to me to be so cruel and relentless. His questions seemed to strike home as pointedly and as keenly as if they were daggers which he had launched at the breast of the hapless witness. After torturing his victim; perhaps after causing an honest but nervous and affrighted man to swear the very opposite of that which he had come there to say; after bullying an unfortunate witness until, as the common sort put it, he didn't know whether he was standing on his head or his heels, he would tell him to "stand down, sir, that will do," with a snarl on his tongue, and a bitter biting irony in his tones, which effectually destroyed his poor victim's peace of mind for some days at least.

Although he might only say, "stand down, sir, that will do," he would say these words in a way,

and in a tone, which I cannot describe, but which implied as clearly as words can imply anything, "stand down, you ignorant, incompetent, double-faced, lying scoundrel. I have done with you, and I think I have shown you to the world in your true colours at last." And I have seen worthy men, and women too, leave the witness-box with their honest faces red with shame at having been held up to the world, and described in characters, which, for anything that I know, may have suited him who used them, but which were surely wide of the mark when applied to those to whom he addressed them.

Perhaps Sergeant Stinge may have deluded himself into the belief that in acting thus he was only doing his duty to his client, and earning the money of those who employed him. I think the sooner such men learn that the defamation of honest men and women, and the bullying of the meek and nervous, are no part of their duty, the better it will be for all parties.

Such was the man who now rose to state the charge against Marmaduke Ravenshale. He commenced by saying, that, although he had no doubt the gentlemen on the other side would do their best to introduce much extraneous matter into this very simple case, he nevertheless hoped that he should be able to put it in such a plain and intelligible way, and to bring forward such undeniable and overwhelming evidence, as would enable his Lordship and the jury to come to a

very speedy conclusion. It would be said, no doubt, that a person in the position of life occupied by the prisoner, and with such brilliant prospects as had been before him until now, could have no motive for committing a crime which brought present disgrace and future ruin upon him. It was not for him to enquire into the motives which might have influenced this unhappy young man. He had to deal with facts, stern simple undeniable facts, and the facts which he was prepared to prove, on testimony which was utterly irrefragable, were, that large sums of money had been stolen from time to time from the bank in which the prisoner was employed; that a note for £100 had been discovered in the desk used by the prisoner and of which he alone had the key; that the prisoner had aggravated his guilt by denying all knowledge of the note which had been thus discovered. He would prove these facts by testimony which would bring conviction home to the heart of every unprejudiced person. It was a painful thing to have to brand a fellow-man with the foul name which must henceforth be attached to the unhappy youth at the bar; but, in the interests of society at large, and in the discharge of his duty as an humble member of the profession to which he had the honour to belong, he never shrank from the discharge of his duty because it happened to be painful.

As he thus went on, heaping his foul charges

upon my poor boy, and taking it for granted that there could be no doubt about his guilt, I could see that Marmaduke had to struggle to the utmost with himself to keep down the indignation that was swelling within his breast, and showing itself in the hot flush upon his face, and in the proud curl of his lip. As the counsel for the prosecution uttered the sentence which I have just penned, for one moment my boy lost his self-command, and raising his clenched fists high above his head, brought them down with a heavy blow that echoed through the court, upon the front of the dock. Sergeant Stinge gave a sudden start, but, turning quickly round, looked the prisoner sternly in the face, a look which Marmaduke returned with such effect that the Sergeant, brazen as he was, was fain to drop his eyes.

"I tell the unhappy young man at the bar," he went on, "that it will be better for him, and become him more, to restrain his temper. I tell him, too, that if he think to frighten me from the discharge of my duty by any such display of temper, he is sadly mistaken. I shall do my duty, although I have no doubt that it must be anything but pleasant to him to listen to those facts which I have to lay before you."

He then went more closely into the particulars of the case, dwelling upon each incident which served to bring the apparent guilt of the prisoner more clearly into view, and, in the end, built up a chain of circumstantial evidence which did

much credit to his intellect and skill though little to his heart, a chain of evidence which if it could be established by trustworthy testimony must bear, as I saw at a glance, with terrible weight and deadly effect upon my poor boy.

“And now, gentlemen of the jury, I call upon you,” he concluded, “to do your duty, honestly, fearlessly, and truly, as I have done and shall do mine, to the conclusion of this melancholy case. I deplore as deeply as any one the unfortunate position in which the unhappy prisoner is placed, but I have yet to learn that the sacred claims of justice are to be sacrificed in deference to any individual, no matter how young, how interesting, or how unfortunate he may be. You will be told, I doubt not, of the high position to which this young man was born; a position to which your verdict, if it be favourable will restore him; from which, if it be unfavourable, it will for ever drag him down. You will be told of his youth and of the life which, perchance, has been already blighted in its spring. You will be told, I doubt not, to look upon his noble face, a face which would certainly seem to be the index of a noble nature if we did not know that “a man may smile, and murder whilst he smiles.” Yes, gentlemen of the jury, you will be told, I doubt not, many things to this effect; and strong appeals will, I am sure, be made by my learned friend on the other side to those feelings which no man at the bar knows how to move so skilfully, so

powerfully, and with such results to the cause he pleads, as himself.

But, gentlemen, I see nothing in all this but an additional reason why you should do your plain simple duty, more fearlessly and truly; proclaiming to the world, which takes such a great and natural interest in this case, that there is the same law for the young and the old, for the beggar and the grandson of the baronet who can trace his pedigree up to the time of the Conqueror. I have too much confidence in you, gentlemen, to warn you against those appeals which will be made to your feelings. I know that you will judge, fairly and honestly, between the prisoner and the society which he has outraged. I know that this judgment will be founded on the facts which I have laid before you, and which I shall establish by evidence that you cannot overlook or deny. I know that no reasoning, however specious; that no appeals, however eloquent and touching; will be allowed by you to influence a judgment which must be founded on these facts. Knowing this, I leave the case with confidence in your hands."

He sat down after a speech of nearly three hours in length, a speech of which I have here given but the merest outline, a speech which I have said did great credit to his ingenuity though but little to his heart. It appeared to me, though perhaps I might be prejudiced, to bear very unfairly upon my poor boy; and it was certainly delivered with a caustic bitterness which made it

seem as if the first and dearest object of Sergeant Stinge's existence was to prove that Marmaduke Ravenshale was a reprobate and a thief.

After a moment's pause a junior counsel rose, and the name of Mr. Burketson having been called, that gentleman stepped into the witness-box. And here let me say in advance, that, although this gentleman's evidence was most prejudicial to my poor boy, I do not blame him for what he said. It was clear to all that he gave his evidence with extreme reluctance, and, considering the position which he occupied, I dare say he could not have acted otherwise than he did.

Mr. Burketson examined by Mr. Colt, Q.C.

"You are, I believe, the senior partner in the firm of Burketson, Burketson, and Co?"

"I am."

"The prisoner at the bar has been for some time in your employment?"

"Yes. He has been a clerk in our firm for nearly two years."

"You have, I believe, missed sums of money from time to time lately?"

"Yes. During the last three months we have lost nearly a thousand pounds."

"How did you discover this loss?"

"By the balancing of our accounts."

"When was the last sum of money missing in your house?"

"On Saturday, June 11th, there was a deficit of one hundred pounds."

"Up to that time, I believe, you had no clue to any person who might be supposed to have taken this money?"

"No. Nor for two days after."

"Will you tell us the circumstances which led to the discovery of the missing money?"

"Yes. From information which I received, I thought it my duty to the firm and to the persons in our employment to take steps to have the establishment thoroughly searched, and for this purpose I procured the necessary warrants."

"Will you state the results of that search?"

"Yes; but I may, perhaps, be permitted to say that I make this statement with great pain, and simply in the discharge of my duty. After a rigorous search of the house, and when we had nearly given it up as hopeless, we discovered, carefully hidden away, in a corner of the desk used by Mr. Marmaduke Ravenshale, a note for £100. Upon this discovery the police proceeded to the residence of the prisoner, who, having denied all knowledge of the note, was thereupon taken into custody."

"I believe that each clerk in your employment has a separate desk for his own use, and that he alone has charge of the key of such desk?"

"Certainly."

"May I ask whether on the evening in question you found the prisoner's desk securely locked?"

"Yes; it was securely locked."

"And in whose possession was the key found?"

"In his own possession. He handed it to the officer after his arrest."

"Thank you, sir. That will do."

And, then, Sergeant Carson rose. Tall, of a dignified and portly form, he was about as complete a contrast in appearance and in language to Sergeant Stinge as you could well conceive. But his questions were no less telling, his reasoning no less keen, his blows no less skilfully directed, because he comported himself as a gentleman dealing with others who had feelings to be outraged, and susceptibilities to be wounded.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said to Mr. Burketson, who was just stepping out of the box, apparently well pleased that his share in this melancholy business was over. "I beg your pardon, sir, but I am afraid that I must trouble you with a few questions."

Mr. Burketson resumed his place, whilst the Sergeant, raising himself to his full height, and throwing his barrister's gown back from his chest, turned full upon the witness and delivered a leading question, for which he was evidently quite unprepared.

"I need not remind a gentleman of your high standing and undoubted respectability," he said, in a low measured tone, "that you are here on your solemn oath. And now, Mr. Burketson," elevating his voice till it rang through the court, "I ask you, on your solemn oath, whether you will swear that the bank note found in the desk

of the prisoner was ever in the possession of your house?"

The witness was staggered—"How can I swear that any note was ever in our possession unless it were one of our own, one that we had marked, or one of which we had taken the number?"

"Then I am to understand that the note in question was neither one of your own, one of which you had taken the number, nor one which you had in any way marked?"

"Certainly. It was one of Smith, Jackson, and Symthe's notes; and as we pass a great many of them we do not take their number, or put any special mark upon them."

"Ah!—I see. And, now, Mr. Burketson, I ask you again, will you, or will you not, swear that the note found in the prisoner's desk ever passed through your house?"

"I cannot swear that. To the best of my belief—"

"I do not ask you about your belief. Will you swear this or will you not?"

"No."—After some hesitation—"No. I cannot swear that."

"Ah! I thought so."

"You employ a great many clerks, I believe?"

"Yes; between forty and fifty."

"You stated in your direct evidence, if I remember rightly, that each clerk keeps the key of his own desk. Now, will you tell me, if you please, whether it would be impossible for one

clerk, if he were so disposed, to gain access to the desk of a fellow clerk?"

Mr. Burketson hesitated again; and Sergeant Carson repeated the question more emphatically than before.

"No," he said at length. "I suppose it would not be impossible. Few things are impossible, but, I don't see how it could be done."

"Perhaps another person might not have so much difficulty in seeing that as you have. And, now, sir, since you will not swear that this would be impossible, will you even swear that it would be difficult?"

Again he hesitated, and again Sergeant Carson drew himself up and threw back his gown with a determination of look and of gesture which proved to every one that he was heart and soul in his work, and that he was doing his very utmost for his client; whilst the hush which seemed to pass through the court bore eloquent testimony to the interest which held the lookers-on in such breathless expectation.

"On your solemn oath, sir, will you swear that it would be very difficult for one clerk to gain access to the desk of another without his knowledge?"

"I cannot swear to the matter in that shape. I cannot measure the precise extent of the difficulty which there might be. For example, if a man were maliciously disposed, and laid himself out to do such a deed—"

"I take it for granted," thundered Sergeant Carson, "that the man is maliciously disposed. And, now, sir, supposing this, will you swear that such a man would find it very difficult to procure access, for his own wicked ends, to the desk of a fellow clerk?"

"I really cannot undertake," faltered Mr. Burketson, growing very red in the face, and hesitating more and more painfully in his speech.

"You must give me a direct answer," again thundered the Sergeant with a triumphant look towards the jury. "Will you swear this, or will you not?"

"No. Certainly not. Not in the way you put it."

"Ah!—I thought so," with another triumphant look at the jury.

At this juncture the attorney who was engaged for us, and who, I must say, showed as much heartiness and interest in our case as the Sergeant himself, stood up and whispered something in that gentleman's ear. There was a hurried consultation between the two; and then the Sergeant, first turning and nodding kindly and with a wonderful air of confidence to his client, braced himself for another assault upon poor Mr. Burketson, who seemed most heartily to wish himself a hundred miles away. It was evident that they had fallen upon some fact or link which they deemed would be of great service and importance to the prisoner. It was some time before I clearly saw the new

bearings which the case began to assume; but as I witnessed the confident expression which took possession of the learned Sergeant's face, the keen light that began to shine out of his eyes, and the increased earnestness with which he again turned to his task, the great load that had been weighing so heavily upon my heart for many weary weeks began to grow somewhat lighter, and a hope which I had been almost afraid to entertain, even in the most hidden recesses of my own soul, began to steal in upon me once again.

"I am sorry to detain you so long, Mr. Burketson," again began Sergeant Carson, in the cold measured tones with which he infallibly prefaced his most powerful blows. "Will you kindly tell us whether you have ever had any reason to suspect the prisoner at the bar of mean or dishonorable conduct?"

"No!" answered the witness with genuine earnestness—"Surely not. I should as soon have suspected my own son."

"Thank you, sir. Your heart spoke there, and I am much obliged to you. But, now, will you tell us how it was that you first came to suspect the prisoner?"

"I never suspected him more than I suspected any other person."

"Am I to take this answer as including all the clerks in your employ?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, how was it that you caused your

offices to be searched if you did not suspect any of your clerks?"

"I received a communication recommending me to take this step."

"When did you receive this communication?"

"On Monday the 13th of June, two days after we missed the £100, which was on Saturday, June 11th."

Ah! And upon receiving this communication you procured the necessary warrants, had your premises searched, and discovered this note?"

"Yes."

"Upon my word, sir, you are making my business very easy for me. And, now, Mr. Burketson, will you please to tell us from whom you received the communication which led to this important discovery?"

At this up rose Sergeant Stinge, and for some ten minutes the lawyers had it all to themselves. I need not say that the battle waxed both hot and fierce. Sergeant Stinge contending that Sergeant Carson had no right to put this question, and Sergeant Carson maintaining that not only had he a right to put it, but that he would insist upon an answer being given to it. I am not able to state the grounds on which the point was argued *pro* and *con*, but the end of it was, that, the judge, after expressing his opinion that it had been argued with great ability, decided in favour of Sergeant Carson. Whereupon, Sergeant Stinge threw himself into his seat in a hot passion; whilst

Sergeant Carson more confidently and heartily than ever resumed the examination of the witness.

"From whom, Mr. Burketsen, I repeat, did you receive this communication?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know, sir," thundered Sergeant Carson, with another triumphant look, first at his attorney, and then in the direction of the jury box.

"You don't know, sir. What do you mean by that?"

"I don't know from whom I received it. It was an anonymous letter."

Up started Sergeant Stinge again, and again the lawyers held fierce battle.

"It makes no matter," shrieked Sergeant Stinge, "from whom that communication came."

"No matter!"—thundered Sergeant Carson in reply—"It makes all the matter in the world, sir, as I will show you before I have done with the case."

"Therefore, Mr. Burketsen, I am to understand that you took these grave steps, and caused my client to be arrested for theft, on no better grounds than those furnished by an anonymous letter?"

"Yes, in one sense. Acting on the suggestion contained in the letter which I received, I had the desks searched certainly; and upon discovering the note I preferred—though most unwillingly, I

must again repeat—the charge against Mr. Ravenshale.”

“Upon your solemn oath, sir, do you know from whom you received that letter?”

“Upon my oath I do not know.”

“Can you make a guess who sent it?”

“I cannot.”

“Therefore, you neither know the person from whom you received this important communication, nor can you even make a guess as to the sender?”

“I neither know the sender, nor can I make a reasonable conjecture on the matter.”

“And, now, Mr. Burketson, I will ask you one question more. Considering the vast interests at stake—considering the terrible consequences which must result to the prisoner from an adverse verdict in this case—do you consider it worthy of you, and of the position which you occupy as one of the leading men of this great city, to have taken these most grave and serious steps on no better grounds than those arising from an anonymous letter, which, I have not the least doubt in my own mind, was written by the villain who has been robbing you for the last three months, and who, I am no less certain, took these measures and placed this money in the desk of my unfortunate client, in order to divert suspicion from himself to an innocent man? Do you, sir, I repeat, consider that you have acted in this matter in a manner becoming your own position, or with due regard to that which my client is destined as

I believe, in spite of this unfortunate affair, to occupy and adorn?"

"I acted for the best," answered Mr. Burketson.

"Then, sir, I am sorry that your conduct should have afforded such a painful exemplification of the old adage, that 'bad is the best.' That will do, sir, I have nothing else to ask you." And Sergeant Carson sat down with another triumphant look at the jury.

Mr. Burketson fidgeted about in the witness box instead of stepping out of it. At last, looking at the judge, he said, "I should wish to make one remark with your Lordship's permission."

"Certainly, sir," answered his Lordship.

"I merely wish to say, my Lord, that, although there may or may not have been an error of judgment on my part in this matter, my only object was to do that which I thought right and just to all parties, and the best under the circumstances. I will add, that I have given my evidence with extreme reluctance, and that no man in this court will be more delighted than myself to see Mr. Ravenshale's character vindicated and cleared of all blame in this unhappy affair."

"Come down, sir," cried Sergeant Stinge, "unless you are going to take this matter into your own hands."

"Your remark does you infinite credit, Mr. Burketson," cried Sergeant Carson, and Mr. Burketson, who was a large heavy man, stepped out of the box with a great sigh wonderfully

expressive of the relief which he felt at having done so much at least to undo the evil effect which his evidence might have against the prisoner. Detective officer Johnson then swore to the circumstances attending the finding of the note and the arrest of the prisoner. He was not cross-examined, and this closed the case for the prosecution.

After a brief interval Sergeant Carson rose for the defence. I wish it were in my power to give my reader any idea whatever of this magnificent specimen of forensic eloquence. I wish still more that I could express in any degree the wonderful charm of its delivery—the exquisite modulation of the voice, now sinking almost to a whisper, now ringing through the court in tones that seemed to thrill the listeners with admiration, and bring conviction to the most prejudiced mind—above all, that I could convey in writing any idea of that deep feeling, that earnest honest heartiness, that entire belief in the innocence of the accused, which gave such a force, and lent such a weight, to this unrivalled effort. As it is, I must for many reasons content myself with the briefest record of this great speech, begging my reader kindly to fill up the gaps with which this record necessarily abounds.

“It has been my lot,” said Sergeant Carson, “during the many years in which it has been my privilege to plead before this court, to be engaged in cases of the highest importance; cases which

have demanded the most careful, the most painstaking, and the most unwearied exercise of my knowledge and my skill, as they have enlisted my warmest sympathies and my deepest feelings. But, gentlemen of the jury, I speak with the utmost candour and sincerity when I assure you, on my solemn word, that I have never in the whole course of my long career at the bar, been engaged in a case which seemed to me of so much importance, or one which awakened every feeling of my soul, and enlisted every sympathy of my heart, to the same extent as that in which I have now the honour to appear before you. It is not so much on account of the noble qualities of mind and of heart with which nature has so bountifully endowed my client; qualities which she has written so plainly on the face which looks down upon you from that place of ignominy with an expression of proud and of conscious innocence which must speak more powerfully than any words of mine can hope to do to your minds and your hearts; qualities which have manifested themselves to me in such simple truth, such native dignity, such conscious but such modest strength, during my intercourse with my client, that they have filled me, I will not hesitate to say, with a wondering admiration which is only equalled by my sympathy and my affectionate esteem—it is not so much because your verdict will restore my client to the high destiny to which he has been born, and the proud dignity of his position as the heir of one of

the oldest titles in the country; a position, however, let me add, which can bring no honour to him, but which on the contrary will receive additional grace and dignity from him—it is not so much on any of these accounts, I repeat, that my warmest sympathies and my keenest energies are enlisted in this case; but it is, “and here he raised his right hand on high with an emphatic gesture,” because I am as certain as I am that I stand in the presence of the great Judge of all, that I am here to defend a man who is as innocent of the foul crime laid to his charge as the infant yet unborn. It is because I believe this, with a depth of feeling and conviction which I cannot hope to convey to you in words, that I am here to-day to use the utmost efforts of any knowledge which I may possess, and of any ability which has been given to me, that my client may have the full benefit of the one and the other; and it is because I believe this, as I do from the very bottom of my heart, and with all the conviction of my mind, that I pray most humbly and most earnestly, so to do my duty this day, that my client may suffer no detriment from any want of foresight, of unwearied diligence, or of professional skill, on my part; a result, which, should it unfortunately happen, I shall not cease to deplore to the latest hour of my life.

My learned friend on the other side has told you, with an amount of bitter earnestness which I venture to think was very unnecessarily imported

into this case, and which, as I doubt of the good taste which inspired it, I certainly shall not imitate, that this case rests upon facts, and that you, gentlemen of the jury, are to be guided solely in your judgment by these so-called facts. He also told you that you have nothing to do with motives. If I succeed in showing you, as I confidently hope I shall, that there is not a shadow of a fact in the case—if I prove to you that you have everything to do with motives—I think I shall have a right to demand at your hands that verdict which I believe in my heart is the only one that you can give as honest, as conscientious, and as Christian men.

“I do not wish to attach unnecessary blame to those who have preferred this vile charge. You heard the principal witness for the prosecution say that he acted for the best. I dare say he did. You heard the remark which I felt it my duty to make in reply. I will only add, that, whilst I do not impugn his intentions, I do most emphatically impugn his judgment, and the judgment of those who advised him; and I do say, that this was a case which ought never to have been brought into court. I do say, moreover, that if my client had not, in the open candour of his noble nature, and in the indignant consciousness of his innocence, made a certain statement denying all knowledge of this note, a statement you will please to remember which he made in answer to a question which I altogether deny the right of the officer to have

put, this charge could not have been maintained for one moment. As it is, it rests principally—I will say altogether, upon the fact of the finding of this note in the desk of the prisoner. Now, gentlemen of the jury, I tell you, honestly and sincerely, I do not attach the least importance to this so-called fact. What are the circumstances of the case? Burketson, Burketson, and Co., upon balancing their accounts on Saturday, June 11th, discovered a deficit of £100. You have heard what followed. Acting upon the suggestion received from an anonymous correspondent, an authority upon which, let me tell Burketson, Burketson, and Co., I would not condescend to hang a dog, they had their premises searched, and, of course, they discovered the missing £100. Their anonymous correspondent knew well enough what he was about. But, gentlemen of the jury, it does not necessarily follow that because this firm lost £100, and because a note for this sum was found in the desk of my client, that, therefore, this note for £100 was the £100 which they had lost, or that it represented that sum. It may have done so, or it may not, but there is not a tittle of evidence to prove that it *did*. There is not a tittle of evidence to prove that this note for £100 ever belonged to Burketson, Burketson, and Co.; and I say, that unless this is proved to you by incontestible evidence, the case falls utterly and completely to the ground. My learned friend on the other side did not attempt so prove this all-

important fact. Mr. Burketson, the only witness in the case, refused, as any honest man must necessarily have done in the circumstances, to swear to this fact. You heard his evidence. You heard him refuse to swear that this note had ever been in the possession of the house which he represents, and I will not insult your understanding by dwelling further on this point, or by pretending to draw those conclusions which are so patent and self-evident.

“ But it will be asked, how do I account for the undoubted fact that a note for £100 was found in the desk of the prisoner, who denied all knowledge of it, or of the manner in which it had come there? I am sorry, gentlemen, for the sake of truth and of justice, that the gentlemen on the other side thought it well to envelope this case in so much mystery. I am sorry that they kept back the truth which I forced from the mouth of, I trust, not a reluctant or unwilling witness, but a witness who, I must say, would have acted in a manner more becoming his own dignity and the position of my client, if he had refused to take such grave steps on the authority of an anonymous correspondent, or had, at least, made it known that he had no better authority than this. I regret for the sake of truth and of justice that I did not know this fact before. I regret still more that I have not been able to obtain a sight of this important communication. If you ask me why, I will tell you. I do believe, with all my

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heart and soul, that if I had been acquainted with the existence of this letter, and if it had been left in my hands, even a week ago, I should have been able to trace it to its author. If you ask me what I should have gained by tracing this infamous letter to its infamous author, I will tell you that too. I should have traced this theft to the real thief, since I do not entertain the shadow of a doubt that the villain who wrote this letter is the man who has been robbing the firm for the last three months, and who, becoming alarmed for his safety, took an opportunity of placing this note for £100 in the desk of my client, and then wrote this anonymous letter in order to divert attention from himself to an innocent man.

“Perhaps, you will ask me how this was done. I frankly admit that I cannot tell you how it *was* done, but I will tell you how it *may* have been done. This is the key of the desk occupied by my client. [Here a key was handed to the jury for their inspection.] Upon the slightest examination you will see, gentlemen of the jury, that this is a very common and ordinary kind of a key. I will call a witness to prove that for many hours each day this key was left in the lock of the desk. The same witness will also prove that it was no unusual thing for the occupant of the desk to be absent from his post from time to time. Now, gentlemen, what case could be more easy than for a maliciously inclined person to gain access to my client’s desk during his temporary absence from

his post, and there secrete this money; or what could be more easy than to procure a key which would open this desk, the key being of the most ordinary and common kind; or, what would be easier than to take an impression of the key of this desk in wax, so as to get another one made which would open it? In any one of these suppositions I maintain that a person who wished, and who had reason to divert suspicion from himself, might most easily have accomplished his purpose.

“Do I, therefore,” he continued, “accuse one of my client’s fellow clerks of having done this deed? Gentlemen of the jury, I accuse no man; but I stake my reputation as a lawyer on the fact that the man who wrote the letter is the thief who has been stealing this money, and, who, by means best known to himself, gained access to my client’s desk and there secreted this £100 note. And I do honestly believe that if the gentlemen on the other side had acted with more fairness and more openly, and had allowed me to have access to this anonymous letter, I should have been able to trace it to its author. If they will place this letter in my hands, I believe that I shall be able to bring it home, even now, to the malicious and evil minded villain who wrote it. Whatever may be the result of this trial, I will never rest until I have done everything in my power to sift this matter to the very bottom, and to discover this liar and this thief. I will spare no labour and no expense to drag this skulking

villain—this villain who stabs in the dark and endeavours to lay his guilt upon the shoulders of honest men, into the light. I will yet drag him forth from his fancied obscurity, and I will yet teach him how sadly he miscalculated, when he came to the conclusion that he might take his nefarious measures with impunity. Yes, I will do all this; and I tell you this, gentlemen, not that I may unduly influence your judgment, but that I may induce you to pause ere you return a verdict in this case which subsequent events may show to have been unfounded and unjust. If I have not done this already, it is only because the gentlemen on the other side thought it consistent with candour, with justice, and with truth, to withhold from me those all important facts which I forced from the mouth of the principal witness whom they produced in support of this most wicked and most unfounded charge.”

With a clearness of reasoning which I cannot pretend to convey to you, and with a force and eloquence of language which I can still less hope to express, the learned Sergeant dwelt upon these leading points for the defence, urging their reasonableness to the utmost, and bringing them before the jury from every point of view. After dwelling with equal force and power upon the absence of every motive which could possibly be supposed to animate his client in the commission of such a deed; and after showing the presence of every motive which could restrain a man in

his position from an act which must bring such utter, such complete, such irremediable ruin upon himself, Sergeant Carson thus concluded his powerful and telling speech.

“And now, gentlemen of the jury, I have done. I have shown you that there is not one tittle of real evidence to prove that the note for £100, found in the desk of the prisoner, ever belonged to Burketson, Burketson, and Co. I do not wish to dwell unduly upon this point, because, although it is sufficient to justify me in calling upon you to acquit the prisoner of the charge brought against him, my object is not to gain a mere verdict for my client, but, to repel this foul accusation utterly, unanswerably, and triumphantly. I have shown you how easily this note might have been placed in my client's desk by the person who wrote the anonymous letter recommending the search which led to such important, but, such natural results. I have expressed my conviction that the author of this infamous letter and the thief who stole Burketson Burketson, and Co's money, are one and the same man. I have given you the reasons which led me to this conclusion. I have shown you that every motive which can influence the heart of man—truth, honour, high birth, personal security, immense wealth, if not in his actual possession at least almost within his grasp—must have been present to deter the prisoner from an act fraught with such utter ruin to himself and his brilliant

prospects—an act which could only have been that of a fool or a madman, and I defy you, gentlemen, to look upon my client as he stands there before your eyes and to say that he is either a fool or a madman. Moreover, I will bring a witness of unimpeachable integrity to prove that my client was in no want of money, and could have had no temptation on that score. Yes, I have shown you all this, and, although in the gravity of the interests at stake, and in the intensity of my deep interest and my affectionate sympathy for that true, that honest, that noble youth, I tremble lest I may have left anything undone, I trust I have shown you all these things in such a manner, and with such clearness, as to have brought conviction to your minds and hearts.”

“My learned friend has told you, in complimentary language for which, if it were sincere, I thank him, that I should probably make a strong appeal to your feelings. If by this he meant to insinuate that I shall endeavour to blind your judgments and to lead away your honest convictions, by the aid of mere empty declamation, I beg to tell him that he is utterly mistaken. But, if he meant to say that, having brought this case before you in all its logical bearings, having argued every premise to its inevitable conclusion, having spoken to you and put this matter before you as reasonable men—as men whose feelings when they are moved are moved because the

judgment and the intellect have been already gained to the side of truth and of right—yes, I repeat, if he meant to say, that, having done all this, I should then appeal with all the force and with all the energy of my soul to every sentiment of your hearts, and to every sympathy of your being, which can act upon and animate you as true, as honest, and, above all, as Christian men, then my learned friend was right in his surmises, and he may rest assured that I shall do my very utmost to appeal to your feelings, as he was pleased to express it. I will not say, gentlemen of the jury, that there have been feelings appealed to during this trial, feelings of rancour, of bitterness, and of baseless and uncharitable misrepresentation, which had better have been left at rest. If such feelings have been awakened or appealed to, to those to whom the merit, whatever it may be, of having evoked them is due, I gladly leave it. Be mine a more pleasing, a more honourable, and a happier task.

“Yes, gentlemen, having put this melancholy case before you in all its bearings, I appeal to you as gentlemen of honour, and I ask you boldly, confidently, and without a misgiving, to do justice and truth. Can you, as men of honour—men in whose hands Providence has been pleased to place the fate of the young man who stands there, as he has stood during the whole of these painful proceedings, without a quiver on his lip, or a sign of weakness on his face; strong in the strength which

is given by innocence and by truth alone; can you, I ask, on the evidence that is before you, drag him down from the high estate to which God has called him? Can you condemn him to a life of ignominy, so terrible in its lightest thought to such men as he, that death would be a boon a thousand times to be preferred to such a life? Can you drag him away for ever from the mother's arms that are stretched out in speechless sorrow to this her child, her only son. Are you ready to strike the cruel blow that will infallibly break that poor mother's heart? Gentlemen, I dare say, nay I know, that you have children, sons and daughters of your own, clustering about the hearth-stone of your happy homes. If you be the men I take you to be, you have watched their growing years with ever growing love and interest. You have learnt to read the characters in which truth and innocence have written their names upon the faces of your children. And, now, gentlemen, I ask you to look once again upon the face of the boy, for he is no more, who stands there in the calm and noble dignity of his matchless self-possession—the last and I do believe in my heart the noblest of a long line of noble ancestors—and to tell me, as men of honour and of truth, whether that is the face of a liar or a thief. My friend has told you that “a man may smile and murder whilst he smiles.” I will venture to tell my friend that a man may murder though a smile never pass across his evil face. I will venture to tell him, too, that

there are more cruel stabs than those which are dealt by the murderer and the assassin. If the face of that boy be the face of a thief, then, I am content to be branded evermore as a blind fool and a dupe. But, gentlemen, I know that you will judge differently. Your verdict will be prompted by honour and by truth, and, therefore, I rely so confidently upon it. I rely upon it, most of all, because I believe you to be Christian men. And, therefore, humbly raising up my hands to the great Judge of all, I call upon you to remember that even as you judge, so shall you be judged. I do not ask you for mercy. I do not ask you for favour. I only ask and demand of you—honestly, truly, and as men who are to stand before God—to judge justice and truth between that boy and those who have placed him there.”

As the learned Sergeant sat down, after a speech of which I have not proposed to myself to do more than give you a sketch, loud cheering, which the ushers suppressed as soon as they were able, rose from all parts of the court. A junior counsel on our side then stood up, and the name of Frederick Palmer having been called, that gentleman was sworn. He deposed, I put it as briefly as I can, that he was employed in the same counting-house as the prisoner: that he had frequently seen the key in the prisoner's desk for hours at a time—that the prisoner, like the rest of them, was often absent a few minutes from his desk:

that none of them ever thought of locking his desk and of removing the key during such temporary absences: finally, that he was ready to swear there would be no great difficulty, to the best of his belief, in hiding a note in another clerk's desk; and no difficulty at all, always supposing a fellow to be so disposed, in taking an impression of the key of such a desk.

Several other clerks swore to the same purport, and their evidence was so plain and clear on the point, that Sergeant Stinge hardly condescended to cross-examine them at all.

The next name called was my own, and as I stepped into the witness-box Sergeant Carson rose to examine me. With infinite tact he drew from me the whole history of my connection with his client. The drift of his questioning was to show that Marmaduke had ever been a most steady and regular young man, with no expensive habits to meet, and no excesses to be provided for. Knowing my dear boy as I knew him, I was, of course, able to swear to all this with the utmost confidence and certainty. I was also able to add that they needed for nothing: that the salary which Marmaduke received had more than supplied all their wants; and that I had, time after time, pressed assistance upon my poor boy which he had always absolutely refused to receive. With some compliments, which I do not care to repeat, the Sergeant thanked me for my evidence, and I was about to resume my seat; but Sergeant Stinge

rose and I knew at once from the ugly look upon his face and the sneer upon his lips, that he meant me mischief. He proceeded to cross-question me with great rudeness, trying to make me admit that, if I was guardian to the prisoner, it was because his own grandfather had cast him off, and refused to have anything to do with him. He strove his best to pervert the meaning of everything that I said. For example, after I had owned, most willingly and cheerfully, that the prisoner was most dear to me, and that I would do everything in my power to help him, he endeavoured to make it appear that I was ready to do *anything*, or swear *anything*, no matter how dishonourable or untrue, in order to free my ward. "I beg your pardon, sir," I said quietly, "I thought I was speaking to a gentleman. When I said that I would do anything in the world for my dear ward, of course I meant anything that a gentleman can do consistently with honour and with truth." During the whole of my direct evidence by Sergeant Carson, I may perhaps say that those manifestations of sympathy which had been shown to Marmaduke on his first appearance in the court, and which had never since been altogether wanting, had broken out afresh from time to time; and thus, as I suppose, it came to pass, that when I administered this rebuke to my examiner, the spectators expressed their approbation by a loud hiss which caused Sergeant Stinge to look very confused for a

moment or two, but, which rendered him, I am sure, all the more vindictive and bitter when he again turned to me. I will not trespass on your patience by a repetition of the frivolous and harassing questions which he put to me in order to make me forget what I owed to my dear boy. I am proud to be able to say that I held my own against the cunning and unscrupulous lawyer, and that Marmaduke's cause suffered no detriment at my hands. The lookers-on grew more and more impatient of his line of conduct, and the ushers found more and more difficulty in suppressing the hisses which rose in the court.

The end, however, came at last. "And, now, sir," said Sergeant Stinge, with the ugly sneer on his face more palpable than ever, "will you have the goodness to tell us how it is that you take such a wonderful interest in this young man whom you and my learned friend seem so bent upon exalting into a hero of the first water."

"Yes," I answered without a moment's hesitation, "I will tell you, sir. I take this interest in him because I know him so well, and know him to be worthy of all the esteem and the interest which I can spend upon him; because, in the last hour of his life his father, who was my dearest friend upon earth, committed this dear boy to my charge and keeping; and because I have at home a little child, my only one, whose life in all human probability hangs upon the issue of this day's proceedings."

As I uttered these words there arose in the court a perfect storm of disapprobation, loudly and pointedly expressed, before which even Sergeant Stinge quailed. "Really, Sergeant Stinge," cried the judge at this juncture, "I cannot see what these questions have got to do with the matter in point. I really think, unless you have got some question more to the point to put, you had better allow Mr. Farleye to stand down. He has given his evidence with great straightforwardness, and, considering the very delicate and painful position in which he is placed, I do not think it is fair to harass him with unnecessary questions." Then, for the first time during the course of the trial, it flashed across my mind—filling me with hope and consolation—that the judge was with us; or, at all events, not against us.

"I beg respectfully to differ from your lordship on this point," answered Sergeant Stinge, "but, of course, I bow to your superior judgment;" and down he sat, very red in the face, and with an angry annoyance which he took no pains to conceal.

The judge then summed up the whole case, briefly and with wonderful clearness; "telling the jury neither to be unduly influenced by what Sergeant Stinge called the facts of the case, nor, on the other hand, to lay too much stress on the motives, so eloquently put before them by the able counsel for the defence, which might, and perhaps did, deter the prisoner from committing

such an offence as that laid to his charge. It was for them," his lordship concluded, "to determine whether, under all the circumstances of the case, there were sufficient grounds to enable them to come to the reasonable and conscientious conclusion that the prisoner was guilty of the charge against him."

The jury withdrew to consider their verdict, and the prisoner was allowed to leave the dock and retire into a small room near at hand, whither I need scarcely say that I accompanied him. My poor boy looked very pale and tired after this long day of mental worry and excitement, but he held up wonderfully, even to the very last. He never flinched, he never broke down, and, even now, when every moment might bring the message which would conduct him to the felon's cell, and cast a blight never to be removed upon his opening life, I could scarcely discern a quiver on his lip, or see the slightest sign of weakness, of trepidation, or dismay, upon his noble face.

I was in a pitiable state of agitation and suspense, and my boy seemed to forget himself and his impending fate in order to soothe and administer consolation to me, when it should have been all the other way. I struggled with myself to the very utmost—no one can ever know how I struggled—that I might not add to my poor boy's trouble and heavy care, but it was all in vain. If you had offered me the whole world as the price of it, I could not, I think, have mastered myself

in this supreme moment in the life of Marmaduke Ravenshale. I struggled—I fought—I prayed. My boy put his arm about my neck, and sought to soothe me as if I were a little child. “Bear up, dear guardian,” he cried. “bear up for all our sakes and, most of all, for mine. Never fear for me. I can receive my sentence like a man, whatever it may be. But we all depend upon you, and it will never do for you to break down. Bear up, then, for all our sakes.”

But it was no use. How was I to bear up, when, perhaps, in another hour, this dear boy, so calm, so noble, so strong in conscious innocence, would have been branded before the world as a skulking thief, and I should be bearing the tidings to those who would never raise their heads again? Bear up, indeed! Oh! how was I to do it? I think I lived a life of years in that half hour—it was no more—which elapsed before Sergeant Carson came running in to tell us that the jury were returning into court with their verdict. I thought I should have fainted when I heard his words, although I was thankful that we should know the best or the worst in a few moments more, for I could not have held out much longer. For one moment my boy laid his poor face upon my breast, and then raised his head with the old proud gesture, and signified that he was ready. I made a great effort to master myself. I put my arm in his to show them, that, whatever the verdict might be, I was not ashamed of him; and

thus we passed once more into the crowded court in which I do believe there was not another man at the moment half so calm, so nobly self-possessed, as the prisoner, Marmaduke Ravenshale.

When we got back again they had lighted the gas, for the shades of evening had fallen upon the place. Every one was in his seat, and the anxious expectation which had kept the spectators in their places from ten o'clock in the morning till seven at night, was about to receive its reward at last. The prisoner took his place in the dock. I stood close beneath him, holding his hand in mine, and then the jury returned into court.

One by one, as they came in, I scanned their faces with an eager soul-absorbing scrutiny. I had to cling with one hand to the dock in order to support my trembling limbs, but I never relinquished my hold of my poor boy with the other. One by one—staid, grave, anxious-looking men—they were all in now. As the question was put, that question of such awful import to some at least who were standing there, a silence as of death—a silence infinitely painful in its intensity, fell upon the vast assemblage. You might have noted the falling of a pin to the ground in the crowded court as the dry cold voice was heard:

“What say you, gentlemen of the jury: Guilty, or not guilty?”

“NOT GUILTY, my Lord:” was the answer without a moments hesitation.

An instant's pause—one great sigh of relief, rising simultaneously from the over-charged breasts of hundreds of strong men, and of true and sympathising women—and, then, cheer upon cheer echoed through the court till the old oak rafters seemed to ring again with the sounds of jubilant rejoicing! Cheer upon cheer, that was taken up by the anxious crowds who thronged every avenue and passage to the court! Cheer upon cheer, that was communicated by them to the thousands who waited in the streets outside, till it seemed as if the whole city had gone mad with exultation and with joy! Cheer upon cheer, that bore eloquent and overwhelming testimony how fully and how entirely justice and truth had found their sanction and their approval in the hearts of the countless thousands who had waited all day through, that thus they might bear willing and cheerful witness to the verdict which the wires were already carrying to every part of the kingdom!

The officials made no effort to put it down, and the cheering was taken up and repeated again and again. But, presently, the scene began to swim before my eyes, and yet, somehow, I saw it all. I saw ladies in the gallery waving their handkerchiefs and scarves. I saw dry, old, matter-of-fact looking barristers, shaking hands and blowing their noses violently. I saw young barristers standing upon the benches, and waving their wigs round their heads, in triumph. I saw

Sergeant Carson run over and seize his client by his hands. I saw them all—barristers, lawyers, attorneys, and spectators, pressing round him to shake him by the hand. But, I saw him turn away from all of them, and hold out his arms to me; and, then, I saw and heard no more.

When I came to myself we were in the little room whence we had gone out to hear the verdict. My head was resting on my brave boy's breast. Sergeant Carson was shaking me heartily by the hand; and, so, by degrees, I came round, feeling very much ashamed of myself for having, once in my life, fairly fainted away.

Presently, in came the judge, looking very ordinary and commonplace without his wig and scarlet robes. "I congratulate you, Mr. Ravenshale," he said, shaking Marmaduke warmly by the hand. "I congratulate you with all my heart. You have borne a trying ordeal nobly, as no one but a true gentleman could have borne it. This case ought never to have been brought into a court, but you need not regret it. You emerge from this trial without spot or stain upon your name. I wish you many years of happiness and prosperity. I don't know whether all the Ravenshalles dead and gone have been such true and noble gentlemen as you have proved yourself this day; but, if they have, you need not be ashamed of your race; neither need we doubt of what stuff the coming generation will be made. As for you, Mr. Farleye," he said, coming over to

me (I am almost ashamed to repeat his handsome words) "I only hope, that, if God ever leave my dear children without a father, he will provide them with such a guardian as my young friend here has had the good fortune to possess." Before I had recovered from the confusion into which his kind, though unmerited, compliments threw me, he had gone.

When we appeared in the street, I thought we should have been torn in pieces before we reached the carriage that was waiting for us. But, at last, we got away. I had sent a trusty messenger to prepare his mother for the coming of her darling. A little while, and I saw that mother's arms about his neck. I heard the cry which went up from the mother's heart to the throne of God. I looked upon the full and perfect realization of hopes which, but an hour ago, I had not dared to contemplate. I felt in my inmost heart that God had been good to us in a measure even far beyond our wildest expectations. I felt that he had brought us unscathed out of the desert: that he had led us triumphantly through the dark waters of desolation. Murmuring in the fulness of my joy, that He is good to those that fear Him—that His mercy endureth for ever, I stole softly out and left them there alone. I left him with his mother's arms about his neck—with his sister clinging to his side; that I might hasten to carry the joyful news to a little heart that had nearly pined itself to death for his dear sake; that I

might whisper the joyful words, which, I knew full well, would bring its happiest smile to the pretty little face, that—alas for me! was now so seldom seen to smile.

BOOK THIRD

AUTUMN.

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play !
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay !


And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill ;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still !

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

TENNYSON.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE SHADOWS OF THE DEAR OLD HOME.

HEN I sat down to pen this simple story of a simple life, it seemed to me to shape itself, almost without effort or thought on my part, into three epochs or states, Spring, Mid-day, and Autumn. The spring and the summer too have passed away, and I stand upon the threshold of the autumn of my life. Not indeed that in point of time, much space has elapsed between the incidents which I have just related, and those which I have now to tell. But, as there are some days which add years to the life of a man; so, also, there are some incidents, so momentous in their nature, and so telling in their influence, that they draw the line, with a sharpness which cannot be mistaken, between the epochs into which the life of every man is marked and portioned out. And, hence, although in point of time there was only an interval of a very few short days between the trial of Marmaduke and the death of my little child, I felt with a clearness which I could not have hidden away nor concealed from my sight,

if I had striven ever so hard to do so, that, as I left him in his grave and planted the cross above the place where the last of the Farleyes was laid to his rest, I had drifted at once into the autumn of my life, and that for the rest of my days I must be content to wend my way and to pick my steps among the autumn leaves which were scattered along my path.

Despite my never-sleeping watchfulness, my yearning anxious love and care—despite the tender and womanly attentions of Ethel and her mother, my little child had been drooping and fading away. He never complained, he never became peevish or restless as he might well have done, but his little face grew paler every day, his little hands more wasted and more thin, his little crutch was laid aside, for now we never heard the plaintive music of its pit-pit-pat upon the floor, and I strove to nerve my heart for that which was surely close at hand—strove to nerve my heart to face like a man the gathering storm that was so soon to burst upon my head, and drift me away once more, upon its cruel and relentless surges, into the darksome sea of sorrow and of pain.

My little little child! My bonny bonny bairn! How can I write it down? How can I put it into words? How can I tell the sad sad tale? As I said just now, he had been drooping away for many weeks, and, yet, so gradually and so faintly, that only the keen and watchful eye of love such as that

which tended and cared for him would have marked the fading out of his innocent life. I was beginning to hope that, by tender nursing, my fragile flower might be left to gladden my lonely life for many a day to come. I was beginning to feed and buoy myself up with those delusions which are never so abundant in one's soul as when they are most baseless and most hopeless. I was just beginning to hope against hope, when the news of the arrest of Marmaduke fell like a thunderbolt upon our little household, bringing sorrow, dismay, and death in its train.

My child never raised his head again. In the innocent love of his childish heart he had taken so much to Marmaduke; his fragile life had become so bound up in that of the noble handsome vigorous youth who never seemed so happy as when he was careering round our meadow with his little friend upon his shoulders; that he never raised his head again from the crushing blow which fell with such a withering force upon it. I broke it to him as gently as ever I could, but it was of no avail. I tried to persuade him that it would all be over soon, and that Marmaduke would be free again. He only shook his head despairingly, and hid his little face upon my breast, and wailed and cried for his dear dear 'Duke.

I knew it now—God help me!—I knew it now, and I strove my best to prepare myself for its coming. The good old priest from Ravenshale

had come up to town to be near Marmaduke during these sad days, and I brought him in to see my little child; that he might hear the childish confession, and prepare the innocent soul to meet its God—to minister for the blessed evermore an angel at its maker's throne.

It was some little time before I could make out whether the child knew what was so close at hand; and, of course, we sought to hide it from him as long as we could. Whilst I was sorely perplexed in my mind about this matter, my difficulties were solved in a manner which I little anticipated. I was accustomed to go almost every day to the prison where Marmaduke was confined; partly that I might see my ward, and partly to look after the many arrangements which had to be made in preparation for his trial. I always told my little child where I was going, and, for the first few days, he was accustomed to send his childish greetings to Marmaduke verbally by me. "Take my dearest love to my poor 'Duke," he used to say, "and tell him that I love him better than all the world, except my own papa. Tell him that I don't believe the naughty things these wicked men are saying about him; and tell him, too, that when I say my prayers I always ask the good God to take care of my poor poor 'Duke."

This went on for a week or two, and my child had never dropped a syllable by which I could divine that he was conscious of the change—so blessed for him, so terrible for me—which was at

hand. But, one morning, shortly before the time at which I usually started for the prison, the child beckoned me over to the side of his little bed, and asked me to write a letter for him to his dear 'Duke. Only too happy to gratify any of his innocent fancies, I got the pen and ink and drew my desk to the side of his bed. When he saw that I was ready to begin he asked me whether it would be very troublesome to me to lift him out of his bed and hold him in my arms whilst he told me what he wanted me to say. I complied with his request, and held him to my breast with one arm, whilst I prepared to write. "My dearest 'Duke," he whispered in my ear, "My dearest 'Duke—I have asked papa to write this little letter for me, because I want to tell you that I love you very much, and that I don't believe those wicked stories which they have told about you. My dearest 'Duke, I am very lonely without you, and I should like to see you—oh! so much. I shall never forget you, my poor, poor 'Duke, and I hope"—and here the feeble voice broke down, and the little hands were clasped entreatingly about my neck, as he whispered in my ear, "You wont mind it much, O dear papa, you wont mind it very, very much!"—"and I hope that you will sometimes think of me when I have gone away to heaven." But, when it came to this, I had to lay him down again upon his bed, and hide my face between my hands as I fell upon my knees. As I lay with my face upon his

pillow, the little hands were twined again caressingly about my neck, and the little face was turned entreatingly to mine. "You will not mind it much, papa, you will not mind it very, very much?" he whispered to me again and again, as he strove to draw my face to his. How long I lay with my face upon his bed—how bitter were the tears which flowed in torrents from my eyes—how fierce the agony—how terrible the struggle which almost rent my heart in twain—it matters not to say. When at last I raised my head I was able to look my fate in the face, and although I knew that my child was conscious of that which I had trembled to whisper to his ear, I thought that now I was man enough to meet that fate without adding one pang, by outward show of any grief or pain of mine, to the closing days of my darling's fleeting life.

A few words more, and the simple childish letter was written. "My dearest 'Duke,'" he went on, "I want to ask you," and here the little hands went up again caressingly to my face—"to love my poor papa very much, and to be his son when I have gone away."

"O my precious boy," I cried, "I cannot write those cruel words. I hope that God will leave you to me; but, if He take you to Himself a few short years before I come to join you, I can never have another son but you. I can never have another child except my own dear little lamb."

I strove with all my power to prevail upon him to allow me not to write these words, for indeed my heart rebelled against them and refused, now that it was thus brought home to it, to admit the fact which it had long ago been compelled to acknowledge. But the child fretted so much, and grew so uneasy at my refusal to pen the words, which it so wrung my inmost heart to hear him speak in his childish innocence and his priceless love for me, that out of very compassion to him I was fain to humour him; and, so, the simple letter was written at last and sent, for I had not courage to take it myself, to Marmaduke.

It came very quickly after this. When Marmaduke was restored to us there was a feeble flickering of the dying flame, but it was only a last faint flicker. On the night of his acquittal, I had scarcely reached my home ere I was followed by Marmaduke, who, after spending a few minutes with his mother and sister, had hurried away to the side of the bed on which his little friend lay, so calm and still, drifting away more and more rapidly to the everlasting shore. As Marmaduke threw himself in an agony of grief by the side of the bed, the child took his hand and gently placed it in my own. He kept us thus, hand in hand, for a minute or two—held up his little face that we might kiss him—and, then, turning his head away, with a look of intense happiness and peace playing across his countenance, was silent for a long long time.

Three or four days more, and, all was over. The last innocent confession was made; the sacred communion—his first and his last—was administered to him; and then the end came, as I would most surely have wished it to come, when my little child and I were quite alone. He lay upon my breast, as I watched his fading face and murmured holy words and holy names in the ear which—ah me! ah me! so soon would never listen to my voice again. One gasp for breath—one fruitless effort to raise the little hands and put them round my neck—one long last look of the eyes which met my own with such a world of yearning, ceaseless, never-dying love in that last glance—a sudden deepening of the solemn shadow which settled all at once upon the fair young face—and then—oh! with what a tender and a loving hand, I laid upon his bed all that remained to me of the little angel who had winged his way to God.

I had promised the old man, my father, that, so long as I lived, a stranger should never make his home in Farleye Hall. But I knew that there would never be another Farleye now; and, so, as part of a plan which I had already formed for the future, a plan which I hoped to live to mature, I proposed to take my child once more to the quaint old house where so many of our race had lived and died.

The night before we were to start, for Marmaduke was to accompany me on this sad journey,

I remained until it was very late, watching by the side of the placid little form that on the morrow was to be hidden for ever from my sight. After I had retired to my own room, I sat there silent—sad—sorrowful—oppressed with many gloomy thoughts, and with no inclination to retire to rest. When the night was very far spent, something, I scarcely know what, prompted me to steal down once more to the chamber of the dead. As I softly opened the door of the room in which he lay, I started back in terror and affright as my eyes fell on a figure which was stretched, sombre and dark, across the foot of the bed. I ran over with hasty steps, and then I saw at once that it was Roger.

Ever since the death of the child the poor old man had wandered about in a dazed kind of a way—neither eating nor drinking—taking no notice of any one—never opening his mouth except to pray, and to wail in our strong north country accent, “my bonny bairn—my bonny bonny bairn.” As I recovered from my surprise the first idea which struck me was, that, wearied out with watching and with grief, the old man had fallen asleep on the foot of the bed at which he had come to keep this last sad vigil. He knelt at the side of the little bed, with his face prone upon the sheet, one of his arms stretched out across the child’s feet, and his other hand laid close to the calm still face that was all so unconscious of its touch. Thinking, as I have said, that he had

fallen asleep, I went over to him and laid my hand gently on his shoulder.

"Roger," I said, "Roger, my dear old friend, get up and come away." There was no answer, and I wondered how he slept so soundly.

"Roger," I said, more loudly than before. "Roger," it is I—it is Master Arty—do, for my sake, get up and come away,"—and as I spoke, in the earnestness of my entreaty, I laid my hand upon that which was resting by the side of the child's calm placid face. As I did so, the icy coldness of its touch chilled me to the heart with a sudden fear. As I bent down and scanned the old man's face with eager gaze I saw at a glance that it was the face of the dead. The hand that I strove to raise fell back out of mine with that fearful dull dead sound which belongs not to any living thing. Yes! The faithful true old man, who had been so much more than a servant to me and mine, had fallen asleep in very truth; had fallen asleep, calmly and peacefully, by the side of the child whom he had served so well, and whom he had loved with that love which endureth even unto death.

There was a brief delay, and then I took the little child and the faithful true old man, far away from the noise and turmoil of the busy city, and laid them to their long last sleep within the shadows of the dear old home.

CHAPTER II.

REVELATIONS.

AFTER we had laid my little child to rest in the shadow of the dear old home, Marmaduke and I returned to London. God was very good to me, and I did not feel the loss of my child so bitterly or so acutely as might have been expected. But, for all that, and although many circumstances had combined to chasten my sorrow and reconcile me to the loss of my gentle winning pretty boy, I was greatly broken down when we returned to town. Marmaduke, too, showed visible signs of the terrible trial through which he had so lately passed, and of the strain to which both his mental and physical powers had been subjected. Hence, a change of scene was prescribed both for him and for me, and, in obedience to the orders which were laid upon us, we started together for a little tour of several months' duration.

I shall never forget—the remembrance of it is written on my heart in characters of gold—the delicate sympathy, the loving care and watchfulness, with which Marmaduke strove during this time to divert me from dwelling upon my loss with a sorrow that might be either injurious or

unreasonable. When I said just now that God was good to me and that I did not feel my loss very bitterly or very acutely, I did not mean to say, that the remembrance of that loss was ever absent from me. That could never be. I was content to let him go to God—my pretty little child—but, you know, he was my only one, and it was not in the nature of things that my heart should not cling for evermore to the memories of the past, or that the remembrance of my loss should ever be hidden away from my sight. But Marmaduke ever strove his best, his very, very best, to fill the vacant place in my heart; and although no one, not even he, might ever fill that place, still, his tender care, his watchful sympathy, his manly honest love, were as jewels of priceless value cast before my path in the dark days of my trouble and my grief; and, so, by degrees, without trenching upon the memories that were sacred to the little child who was a ministering angel before the throne of God—without filling the one place which could never be filled again, Marmaduke became to me a son in duty and in love—became to me the comfort and consolation, as he had long been, the pride of my life, and one of the objects of my highest and my dearest hopes.

We travelled about for some few months, and then returned to London, all the better, both in mind and body, for our little trip. The mystery of the £100 note had never been cleared up, and although this was not a matter of the slightest

consequence to us who knew him so well and prized him so dearly, still Marmaduke, naturally enough, chafed now and again under the suspicion which he conceived to rest upon his name. Sergeant Carson, who had renewed his intercourse with us, never ceased to impress upon my boy the necessity of patience, and the certainty that this matter would sooner or later be cleared up. We none of us thought how soon this was destined to come to pass.

I think it was about a month after our return to London that a note was brought to my lodgings, for I had given up my cottage since the death of my child, by a messenger who had been despatched with it in all haste. It was from a clergyman, a perfect stranger to me so far as I knew, begging my immediate attendance at a certain house which was specified. Of course I lost no time in obeying the summons, although I was filled with amazement at the nature of it. How little did I anticipate the joyful surprise that was in store for me! How little did I foresee the momentous disclosure that was waiting for me!

I accompanied the messenger who had brought this note to a respectable house in one of the streets off the Strand. On our arrival we were met by a clergyman who at once informed me why he had sent for me. He had been called in, he told me, to attend a young man who was in the last stage of a rapid consumption. He had found the poor patient fearfully agitated and

troubled in mind. Gently and prudently he had drawn from the dying man the cause of this agitation and trouble. To his surprise he had learnt that this poor young man was the person who had taken Burketsen, Burketsen, and Co.'s money—he had been one of their clerks—and placed the note where it had been found in the desk of Marmaduke Ravenshale. He, too, it was who had written the anonymous letter. In fact, the whole matter had taken place precisely in the manner suggested by Sergeant Carson in his defence for Marmaduke. He had not long enjoyed his ill-gotten wealth, for he had been suddenly struck down by the fell disease which was already hurrying him to the grave. With the terrors of the world-to-come pressing upon his poor sin-stained soul he had sent for the clergyman, who, very properly, had informed him that his first step, ere he could hope for mercy and forgiveness from God, was to clear the name of the innocent man whom he had, at least by his acts, falsely accused. He expressed his readiness to do this, whereupon the clergyman, who had heard all the particulars of the case at the time of the trial, had sent for me, thinking it more prudent that I rather than Marmaduke should be informed of the turn which this affair had taken. He added that the dying man was ready and anxious to make whatever reparation was in his power to him whom he had so grievously injured.

Having ascertained from the medical attendant

that his patient could not possibly survive many hours, it was evident that our first step must be to procure the attendance of a magistrate, in order that the dying man might make a formal deposition of this most important affair' Accordingly, having first introduced me to the sick room, the clergyman hastened to seek a magistrate. I drew near to him who in these his last moments was about to perform an act of tardy justice, and spoke kindly to him. He was a young man, not more than two or three and twenty years of age, and it was plain that his hours on earth were numbered. At first he turned away his face from me and hid it on the pillow; but when he heard me speaking kindly to him—and, indeed, I could not have spoken otherwise when I looked upon that poor wasted face, and thought how soon he was to stand in the presence of his God—he seized my hand and tried to press it to his lips. "I have been very wicked, sir," he gasped out, "but, I am very sorry. God knows I am very sorry for it now. I fell into bad company, and then my troubles began. My wicked friends partly persuaded and partly frightened me into taking that money. But, it never prospered with me—it never prospered with me. I put the note in Mr. Ravenshalls's desk because I thought that he, of all my fellow-clerks, was least likely to be prosecuted if suspected of such a crime. When he was arrested and sent for trial I was filled with horror. I knew that my evil ways had found me

out, and that the vengeance of God would fall upon me if I did not come forward and clear an innocent man. But, oh!—Mr. Farleye, I durst not do it—I durst not do it; and the vengeance of God *did* fall upon me and brought me to this pass. But I will do my best to make it right now, and I humbly pray my Maker to have pity and compassion upon me. I have no reason to expect that Mr. Ravenshale can ever forgive me for the trouble I have brought upon him; but it would make me very happy if I knew that he would, at least, think as kindly of me as he is able; and try to forget my great wickedness in the remembrance of my great sorrow.”

I did my best to comfort and console him. I told him to remember there is no sin so great that it cannot be washed away by the tears of repentance. I told him to be quite certain that Marmaduke Ravenshale would forgive and forget whatever trouble or injury had come to him from this deed. I took upon myself, in the name of my dear boy, to speak such words of forgiveness and of comfort as brought peace and tranquillity to the troubled soul of this sadly-erring, but, I am sure, truly repentant young man. And, I told him, too, that although it would be necessary for the full vindication of Marmaduke Ravenshale's character to publish the deposition which he was about to make, it should not be made public until he had passed away.

He had scarcely done speaking when the clergy-

man returned, accompanied by a magistrate and his clerk. The deposition of the dying man was duly taken down, and signed by him, in the presence of the magistrate. The magistrate then affixed his name, the clergyman and the doctor signing the document as witnesses. I spoke a few parting words of kindness and of consolation to him, and then took my leave of the dying man with a fervent prayer upon my lips, that, in the hour of his need, in the moment of his judgment, God might remember to him the justice that he had done to Marmaduke Ravenshale.

As soon as I returned home I sent for Marmaduke. "Marmaduke," I said to him, when he had come to me, "you have borne much hard fortune like a true and noble man. Do you think you can bear good fortune as bravely as you have borne the evil?"

He looked surprised and at a loss for my meaning. "Dear guardian," he answered, "I think you know that I can, with the help of God, bear any fortune, good or bad, like a Christian man."

And, then, without another word, I placed the deposition which I had brought with me in my brave boy's hands.

As he read it I saw the hot blood rush tumultuously across his face. A moment more, and he threw himself upon his knees before a large crucifix which hung in my room, and bowed his head until his face nearly touched the ground. Thus he knelt for many minutes, his hands

clasped in prayer, and the tears streaming down his noble face. My brave brave boy! He had not shed a tear in all his trials. He had confronted the worst fate that could have fallen on his life without a quiver of his lip, but he was weeping now hot tears of thankfulness to God; hot tears, which, welling up from a heart that had never been more truly brave or noble than in this the moment of his manly weakness, were at once the testimony of his faith in God—of the hope that had never wavered—of the confidence that had never faltered—of the love that had never doubted or grown cold.

Presently he rose from his knees and came over to where I stood. "Dear guardian," he said, taking my hands and struggling for utterance with the emotions that almost overpowered him; "you have been more than a father to me. You are ever adding some new obligation to those which already can never be repaid. But, you have crowned them all in placing this paper in my hands. It is more precious to me than the honors and the riches of all the Ravenshalles ten thousand times over. I cannot say much, now, dear guardian, for my heart is very full; but my tongue shall have cleft to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand shall have forgotten its cunning, ere I forget what I owe to you; ere I forget my duty and my love to you—my father, and my friend."

In less than a week the deposition had been

published in all the papers. The city rang with the strange story, and the public enthusiasm which had manifested itself so unmistakeably at the time of his trial broke out again, and for some days the humble cottage in which the Heir of Ravenshale had taken up his temporary abode was besieged by those, and some of the highest in the land were amongst the number, who thronged to offer the tribute of their sympathy and respect to the noble youth who had been tried so fiercely in the furnace of affliction, and who had proved himself such true and sterling gold.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING SHALL ENJOY HIS OWN AGAIN.

WE had scarcely recovered from the excitement into which the events recorded in the last chapter had necessarily thrown us, when the wires brought us news of another event, as little expected, but vastly more important in both its immediate and permanent results. Sir Lionel Ravenshale was dead! I humbly pray that he made his peace with God, and that at the last he turned with thoughts of love and reconciliation to those whom he had so grievously and so persistently injured; whether it were so or not I cannot say—that is known alone to God, and, perhaps, to the priest who ministered to him in his dying hours. But, he died and made no sign; died in the loneliness and the neglect which he had chosen for his portion—a terrible example of the ruin which may be wrought by a will that has never been subdued—by a pride that has never been restrained and brought into subjection—a terrible example how Christian privileges may be abused—how men, born for higher and for holier things, have it yet in their power to trample those priceless privileges, those holier things, under their

feet; the power, the accursed power, of turning away from God, and of bartering for that, which is more worthless than a mess of pottage, the glorious prerogatives and the precious inheritance which belong of right to the most lowly and most humble child of the holy Catholic faith.

We went down to attend the old man's funeral, which, agreeably to directions which he had left, was conducted in the most private and simple manner. Immediately after the ceremony we returned to London where we remained for several weeks. Then, I accompanied Sir Marmaduke Ravenshale when he went to take possession of the grand old Hall, and of the immense estates which were his at last.

There were, as you may readily imagine, great doings in Ravenshale on that auspicious day. Sir Marmaduke's father, my poor friend Lionel, had been known and deeply loved by all the people round about. The late baronet had for many years led such a secluded and lonely life, and the public opinion of Ravenshale had been so decidedly against him in regard to the manner in which he had treated his son and his son's children, that the revulsion of feeling was all the stronger now, when the young baronet was about to come and take possession of his own—when the chimneys of the old Hall would be seen to smoke once more—and a Ravenshale would reign again in the real old Ravenshale fashion.

We travelled down by train to Ravenshale

station. They had dressed it out with green boughs and gay bright flowers. As the train arrived rockets were sent up, and immediately the bells of Ravenshale—the brave old bells that had rung for so many hundred years—pealed out triumphantly. There was a carriage drawn by four grey horses waiting outside the station-door. When Sir Marmaduke stepped forth, hat in hand, with a smile of kindly greeting on his face, and the people saw their young master for the first time, and saw that he was every inch a true Ravenshale of the good old type, I thought they would have gone frantic with excitement and joy.

As he stood in their midst, with the kindly smile mantling upon his lips, with the honest exultation of his heart beaming out of his bright blue eyes, with the light of the mid-day sun shining down upon the golden glory of his uncovered head, they crowded round him, waving their hats and handkerchiefs, and cheering lustily in the honest heartiness of their unsophisticated welcome. We had scarcely taken our seats in the carriage ere the horses were unharnessed, and sturdy willing hands were preparing to draw him to his home.

They had brought in a band of music from one of the neighbouring towns. The old Jacobite traditions and feelings lingered long in our north country parts, and, hence it was, I suppose, that as Sir Marmaduke took his seat, they struck up the old air, "the king shall enjoy his own again."

Thus we passed through the streets of Ravenshale. There were few houses which were not dressed out with flags, there was none so poor but hung up its decoration of bright green boughs and fresh fair forest flowers to welcome the young baronet to his own again. Slowly, impeded at every step by the eager and demonstrative welcomes of our honest Yorkshire country folk, we advanced up the glorious avenue which leads to Ravenshale. As we drew near to the noble flight of steps before the entrance hall, it became evident that this was the point marked out for the great demonstration of the day. Clad in white, and with faces bright and ruddy as autumn apples, the children from the village schools were ranged in two lines up the steps. They held in their hands baskets of flowers to be scattered, no doubt, at the proper moment. And who should there be, standing on a table at the bottom of the steps, but Mr. Perkins, spectacles on nose, and paper in hand, waiting to read an address of welcome! He was a wonderfully old man now, but he acquitted himself gallantly. With the help of sundry promptings from some one behind, probably his successor in the school, he read the address with great spirit and energy, and his audience cheered him to the skies. I suppose he had not been prepared for my presence on the occasion, but even that did not disconcert him; for, after concluding the address to Sir Marmaduke, he suddenly, and to my great confusion,

turned to me. "Neither can I forget, Mr. Farleye," said he, "the happy days when it was my privilege to impart the foundations of a polite and liberal education to you. In my own name, and that of your humble friends and neighbours round about, I offer you a hearty welcome home. And we all hope that you intend to stay amongst us now, and that we shall see more of you than we have lately done. Things aren't as they should be, if you and Sir Marmaduke will excuse my boldness in saying so, when Ravenshallye and Farleye haven't got their masters at home."

"And, now, lads," cried Mr. Perkins, bringing his speechifying to a close, and leading off hat in hand, "now, lads, with a will and a half! Long life and happiness to Sir Marmaduke Ravenshallye! Hip, hip, hurrah! Nine times nine and one cheer more!"

And, thus, with his hand upon my arm; amid the pealing of the bells, the joyful strains of "the king shall enjoy his own again," and the echoing of vigorous hearty Yorkshire cheers that made the old woods of Ravenshallye ring again; with the sun shining down in welcome upon his head, and with the innocent children scattering the fair fresh flowers of spring before his feet, Sir Marmaduke Ravenshallye took possession of his own.

As soon as we were inside the door and screened from the public gaze, he turned and laid his hands upon my shoulders. "Guardian," he said, calling

me by the old familiar name, and with a world of honest affection beaming out of his eyes. "Guardian, I promised the little child who sleeps almost within hearing of my voice that I would be a son to you when he was gone. If I am to be a son to you, you must be a father to me; and if you are to be my father, then, you know, you and I can never part again. And, so, dear guardian, I will not enter this house, nor take possession of my own, until you promise me that my home shall be your home, and my dwelling your dwelling."

"Be it so," I answered through my grateful tears. "Be it so, dear boy, if this is your desire. I have none left to me to love on earth but you and yours. Let, then, your dwelling be my dwelling, and your home be my home, as long as I tarry in the world; and when my time has come, let your hands lay me to my rest. I neither wish nor pray a happier or more blessed lot."

CHAPTER IV.

ETHEL.

A FEW words more of those with whom, and with whose fortunes, my own life became so intimately mixed up, and I have done. And, yet, my task to-day is more with Ethel—sweet, gentle, innocent Ethel—than with Sir Marmaduke or his mother. Sir Marmaduke's father, my poor friend Lionel, had before his death made all the necessary arrangements and provisions which devolved upon him as the only son and heir of old Sir Lionel. In accordance with these provisions the present baronet was bound, on succeeding to the family estates, to pay a large sum of money out of those estates to his sister, with a further sum to be paid to her as a dowry at her marriage, should she enter the married state. If she had not married within five years of the time when her brother succeeded to the family estates this latter sum was then to be paid to her absolutely and without condition.

Hence, when we add to her beauty, her winning manners, and the many graces of her character, the fact that she was one of the wealthiest heir-esses in our part of the country, it is no wonder

if suitors crowded round her and sought her hand. But, even in those days when she was living amongst, and taking her due part in, all the splendid and lavish hospitalities and festivities which ensued upon Sir Marmaduke's taking possession of his own, her pure and simple heart was never really in them, and, in the true and full sense of the words, she used the world as though she used it not. At the very time when Ravenshale was crowded with the highest and noblest of our county gentry, I scarcely ever took one of my early morning walks without meeting Ethel in the village, on those missions of charity and love to the poor which she never failed to discharge, no matter how much her duties, later on in the day, might throw her amongst the rich and the great. And, as she moved amongst the blessed poor of Christ with the benedictions of the widow and the orphan, the sorrowful and the weary, following her steps and winging their way, like sweet smelling incense, to the throne of Him whom she ever saw in the persons of His suffering members; so, she moved too amongst her peers with such an innocent grace, and a simplicity so beautiful and true, as drew all hearts to her with a force that was irresistible, and made her the idol of the circles amongst which she walked.

Many months passed away and I could never perceive that prosperity had wrought any change in this pure and guileless child. Suitors came, and, receiving no encouragement, went their way

again. At last, a young Catholic gentleman of high birth, endowed with every quality of mind and heart which could render him a most suitable partner for my dear ward, came to me in my capacity as her guardian, and besought my permission and encouragement to lay his heart and his fortunes at her feet. The match was, as I have just said, so suitable from every conceivable point of view, that I deemed it my duty to speak of this matter, as delicately as I could, to Ethel. Without reserve, with a confidence which was as full as it was simple, she laid her heart open to me, and then bade me take her answer to the gentleman who sought her hand. That answer, I may as well frankly admit at once, neither astonished nor disappointed me.

In the days of her trials and her adversity—in the days when the great ones of this world had neither known nor troubled themselves about her, there was One who had never ceased to speak to her innocent heart—One who had never failed to fill that stricken heart with His chaste delights and His rapturous consolations—One who had never ceased to call her to Himself, never ceased to invite her to become one of that blessed band whose glorious privilege it is to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and to sing that song which none but they may sing. Yes, in the days of her adversity, Ethel had been called and chosen, had been elected to that better part which is reserved for the privileged few, and she was

not one to turn her back upon the Spouse who had taken her in the days of her poverty, because those days had been changed into days of worldly prosperity and abundance. Wealth, honours, high position—were nothing to her, except in so far as they were something which, in the fulness of her love, in the overflowing abundance of her grateful heart, she might lay at the feet of her heavenly Spouse. She was one who could appreciate to the full—who could estimate at its real worth—the priceless privilege of a vocation to the religious state; and hence, although in wise and prudent deference to the wishes of her director, and to the prayers of the mother and the brother who prized her as she deserved to be prized, she had deferred for a time her final decision, she now told me that the time had come, and that she was already preparing to bid an eternal adieu to the world for which I knew, in very truth, she had never cared—which she had loved still less than she had cared for. When, in her innocent simplicity, she humbly asked my permission, as her guardian, to fulfil her vocation and enter her novitiate, I could have fallen down and have kissed the ground which seemed to me to be blessed by the very pressure of her feet. I was fain to lift up my grateful heart to God and thank him, in such faltering words as I could find, for the great things which He had been pleased to do to this dear child whom He had chosen for His spouse, and whom in His chaste complacency He

had taken to the everlasting fulness of His heart and love.

A few weeks more, and she who had lent such a charm to our happy home, had passed from our midst, to exchange the luxury of Ravenshale for the novice's narrow cell, and the numberless comforts which had surrounded her for the austerities and the mortifications of the novitiate. I need scarcely say that she never faltered in her resolution, nor, having put her hand to the work, ever looked back. During the months of her probation she was as one who was dead to us, for we never sought to break in upon the holy seclusion of her life, or to disturb the sacred communings of her heart with her heavenly Spouse, either by our letters or our presence. It had cost us a heavy pang to part with her, and for many a long day our hearth seemed very lonely, and our home had lost its brightest light. That nature which, in spite of strongest efforts, in spite of very grace itself, will have its way at least for some little time, had wrung our inmost hearts, and drawn hot tears of sorrow from our eyes, as we left her in her new home—that home which was to be her rest, henceforth, for evermore. But, when the first pang of parting had passed away, and faith and grace had triumphed over nature and its weakness, we saw our duty far too clearly to allow us to dare to interfere between our holy child and the God to whom we had given her, as willingly and as cheerfully as it was in nature

for us to do. But when the time of her probation was completed, we all went down from our north country home to be present at her profession; to witness her final and formal renunciation of the world which, in truth, she had renounced long long years ago.

It was a fair fresh morning in the early spring, and as the sun came shining in, with a soft and mellow light, through the rich stained glass of the chapel in which we knelt, all nature seemed to speak of rest, and peace, and love. We had scarcely taken our places ere solemn strains of heavenly music seemed to come to us, floating, as it were, upon the gentle morning air. Nearer and nearer it came, till at last we could distinguish the words of the holy chaunt as it rose and fell: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord." As the holy sisterhood entered with downcast eyes and modest steps, they were followed by Ethel, looking so bright and beautiful in her bridal robes that nature strove to rebel yet once more, as if it were not just and right that the offering to be made to God should be made all the more cheerfully for the very reason that it was so bright, so fair, and beautiful. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, she knelt for some little time at the gate of the choir, but, as the first words of the anthem were intoned: "Come, O spouse of Christ, come and receive the crown which, from all eternity, the Lord hath prepared for thee,"

she rose from her knees and took the place prepared for her. The solemn rite went on until, at the conclusion of the grand high Mass, the deacon sang the Holy Gospel which surely never bears such a special and a touching significance as on occasions like to this.

“At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

“For he that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.

For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works.”

As I listened to the solemn words of the Holy Gospel, my own heart grew full even to overflowing, as I thought how truly, how fully, how intimately, this dear child had realized their meaning, and reduced their sacred counsels to fervent humble practice. I had little time, however, to indulge my own feelings, for the sacred rite immediately went on, and all my attention was absorbed in Ethel.

Placing herself on her knees before the venerable bishop who was to receive her vows, as soon as the question had been put to her, “My daughter, what do you seek?” she answered without a moment’s hesitation, “To make my holy profession,

and, with the help of Divine Grace, to live and die in the perfect observance of my holy rule."

The venerable prelate then proceeded to interrogate her, whether she had contracted no obligations which might hinder her from fulfilling those engagements with which she now sought to bind herself—whether she were influenced by any human considerations in her desire of embracing the religious state—whether she were moved to take this step purely out of a desire for the greater glory of God and for love of His holy name—and, whether she did not shrink from the austerities of the life upon which she thus sought to enter.

She responded, simply and sincerely, that she had no tie in the world to prevent her from fulfilling her engagements with her heavenly Spouse; that she was influenced by no human consideration in thus dedicating herself to the service of God; that, as she humbly hoped and prayed, she had no other motive in the step she was about to take than the glory of God and the love of His blessed name; and, lastly, that, with His divine assistance, she confidently hoped to be able to discharge the duties of that state of life which she sought to be allowed to embrace.

Having addressed a few paternal words of consolation and encouragement to the holy novice who knelt before him, the prelate then returned to the altar, and having incensed the Adorable Sacrament bore It in solemn procession to the

place which had been prepared for It at the entrance to the choir occupied by the religious.

Ethel placed herself on her knees before Him whom she knew, so truly and so really—so fully and with such intimate and unspoken knowledge, under His sacramental veils; and with her head humbly bent in silent adoration, with her hands clasped before her breast in prayer, with visions of love flitting before her eyes, and with whisperings of ecstatic rapture floating through her soul, which such as I can neither understand nor pretend to describe, she waited until the holy anthem which had been entoned by the sisterhood was done. When the last strains of the sacred words, “*O quam suavis es, Domine,*” “O how sweet thou art, O Lord, to them that love Thee,” had died away, Ethel raised her head. Tears of burning love—of love which exists not upon earth save in hearts such as hers—of love which is the beginning of that which is to be perfected in the blessed time to come—were streaming down her face as she raised her head, and looked up to Him whom her soul so truly loved; Him whom she had found so sweet because she had loved Him so truly; Him whom she had so long since elected for her Spouse and chosen from amongst a thousand; Him to whose eternal service she was now to consecrate and vow with her lips the life, the heart, the being, which had already been given to Him for many and many a happy day.

The solemn moment had come, and we knew

and felt it well. As I have already said we did not begrudge our God the offering of a fair and fresh young life, of a pure and holy heart, which we, in some measure, though truly a slight one, were privileged to make Him. But, when all was said and done, we could not forget that this fair young face would shine no more upon our hearth—that this pleasant fresh young voice would sound no more through the halls of the house which she had had so great a share in making so peaceful and so happy. We could not forget that what we had given to God, cheerfully as we might give it, we had given at our own great cost, our own irreparable loss; and, hence, you must not wonder when I tell you—now that the solemn time had come—now that the irrevocable words were to be spoken—our hearts grew too full, and our feelings grew too strong, to be restrained and kept under, strive as we might. I saw her mother's head sink lower and lower still upon her breast, as she strove to nerve herself to listen to the solemn words which were to give one more spouse to Christ, and to make one more mother daughterless. I heard the smothered agony of her speechless grief, as I prayed to God to be with her in this the hour of her sore need, as I prayed to the Heavenly Mother of Comfort and of Help to be with the poor human mother in this the day of her trial. I heard the strong sobs which shook the breast of Sir Marmaduke as he looked upon the face of the sister who had been

his pride and his joy, looked upon it for the last time that he would ever see it looking so fair and beautiful in its worldly adornments. I do not speak of myself or my own feelings, for what were my feelings in comparison of theirs on such an occasion as this; but I may perhaps be allowed to say that, as I humbly bent my head, I breathed as fervent a prayer as ever rose from my heart to God, for this dear child; prayed that He would deign to perfect and to finish the great work which it had pleased Him to begin; to crown this blessed child, His chosen daughter, with the brightest and the fairest diadem of His everlasting love.

But, though the tears were streaming down her face, there was no weakness or hesitation in her voice, as, in tones which, low though they were, fell clear and distinct as the notes of a silver bell upon every ear, Ethel Ravenshale pronounced the words of the solemn vows by which she bound herself to serve her God for the rest of her days in poverty, in chastity, and in holy obedience; bound herself to the perpetual adoration of her Spouse in the sacrament of His love; bound herself to take up that daily ever-present cross, which, they who have the courage to carry it unflinchingly to the end, carry till they lay it down before the throne of God—the witness of their faith and truth—the emblem of their hope—the warrant of their reward—*magna nimis*, exceeding great.

Lower and lower sank 'her mother's head—harder and with more laboured effort Sir Marmaduke draw his breath—more and more earnest rose our fervent prayers—more and more solemn grew the impressive scene—but another moment and it was past. The solemn words were spoken—the irrevocable vows were uttered—and as Sister Mary Benedicta, led by the mother prioress, approached the spot where It was exposed, and, humbly kissing the ground, laid her vows upon the foot of the Monstrance, a sigh of relief arose from our surcharged breasts, and we raised our heads, feeling that the offering which had cost us so much had been made at last, and that in very truth we had laid upon the altar of our God one of the fairest and the purest flowers that had grown in the garden of our mortal life.

Ere Ethel, or, as we will rather call her, Sister Mary Benedicta, could rise from her knees, the bishop stood up, and raising his hands high above her as she knelt, promised her in the name of God whose true and venerable minister he was, eternal life in return for the offering she had made. “On the part of God I promise you, my daughter, everlasting life, if you be faithful in the discharge of these sacred obligations.”

And, then, with holy prayer and solemn chaunt, with consecrating benediction and with mystic rite, the sacred ceremony went on. Whilst we almost feared to breathe lest we might disturb the gentle and yet almost overpowering sanctity of

the scene which was passing before our eyes, the voice of our dear sister rose once more above the solemn silence of the place. "*Suscipe me, Domine, secundum eloquium tuum et vivam, et non confundas me ab expectatione mea.*" Uphold me, O Lord, according to thy word, and I shall live; and let me not be confounded in my expectation." And as she sang this beautiful prayer once—twice—thrice—bowing herself to the earth and humbly kissing the ground as she did so, the holy sisterhood poured forth anew their supplications to the throne of God.

Then she was led once more by the prioress to the place where the Most Holy was still exposed. Taking it in her own, as they both reverently knelt, the prioress presented the right hand of the newly professed to the bishop, that the ring of her chaste espousals might be placed upon the finger from which it was never more to be removed.

"I espouse thee to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, that He may keep thee pure and undefiled. Receive, therefore, the ring of faith, the seal of the Holy Spirit, that thou mayst be a spouse of God; and if thou servest Him faithfully thou shalt be crowned for all eternity, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The ring of her espousals was placed upon her finger, and again her soft sweet voice was heard as it rose in tones of ineffable tenderness to the

throne of the chaste lover of her innocent soul. "I am espoused to Him," she sang, "whom the angels adore, at whose beauty the sun and the moon stand astonished. My Lord Jesus Christ hath espoused me to Himself with this ring, and as a chosen one He hath adorned me with a crown; with a crown of everlasting brightness hath He adorned me."

Again the bishop rose to his feet and lifted up his hands in benediction over her—solemn words of prayer and supplication on his lips the while. "*Benedicat te*," he prayed, "*conditor cœli et terræ*." "May the Creator of heaven and earth—may the Eternal Father who hath vouchsafed to elect thee to the society of the mother of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, bless thee His chosen child; that, pure and immaculate, thou may'st observe those things which thou hast promised before God and His holy angels; that thou may'st be firm in thy resolution; that thou may'st love chastity; that thou may'st guard and watch over thyself in holy patience; that, so, in the end, thou may'st be worthy to receive the crown of everlasting life: through the same Christ our Lord. Amen." And, then, taking in his consecrated hands the Holy of Holies, he blessed her as she knelt in humble adoration at his feet—blessed her with that blessing which is born of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—with that blessing in which the tender care, the compassionate mercy, the yearning love, of the Sacred Heart of the Word made Flesh,

pours forth Himself on man, that He may draw all hearts to Himself with the same enduring cords of love with which He had drawn and bound to Himself for evermore the heart of her who knelt before Him in His sacramental veils, and receiving His benediction, received it as the surest pledge of the strength that was to come to her from on high—the surest pledge of the fidelity of her future years—the surest pledge of the eternal never-fading bliss that was prepared for her in the kingdom of her Spouse.

Then she was clad in the holy habit of religion and the veil was placed upon her head with the appropriate antiphons and prayers.

As soon as she was fully clad in the sacred robes of religion which she was now to wear to the end of her life, there followed what was, perhaps, the most touching part of this solemn ceremony. Prostrating herself upon her face in the middle of the choir, Sister Mary Benedicta was covered with the funeral pall, which, enveloping her fair young form in its black and sombre folds, was a truly fitting and most impressive figure of that eternal adieu which she had bidden to the world and all its concerns. The tall dark-coloured candles, which are only used at a funeral, were lighted, and we knelt around her—as we should have done if we had been assisting at the last obsequies of our dear child—amid a silence as of the grave. Presently, this silence—so solemn and I will say so oppressive—was broken by the low

sweet voices of the holy sisterhood chaunting the office for the dead. When these, and some other appropriate prayers had been recited, the solemn silence fell upon the place once more, and we remained absorbed in prayer, and in the holy tender sentiments inspired by such a scene, until we were once more recalled to the sacred ceremonies which were going on around us by the music of a voice whose tones were hardly more full of beauty than of devotional pathos.

“*Surge, surge, qui dormis*,” it sang with a pathos that was truly touching, “*Surge qui dormis, et exurge a mortuis, et illuminabit te Christus, illuminabit te Christus, illuminabit te Christus*.” “Awake, awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee, Christ will enlighten thee.”

As the words of this beautiful antiphon were entoned, the funeral pall was lifted up, and Sister Mary Benedicta rose to her feet. Bright and beautiful as she had looked in the bridal robes in which she had been clad during the earlier part of the ceremony, how much more beautiful did she not look in the calm and placid beauty of her religious dress. Looking, in very truth, more like a thing of heaven than of earth—with a holy peace and a tender calm upon her face that were not born of earth or of earthly thoughts, she rose to her feet, and, as she did so, the grand old hymn, “*Te Deum laudamus*,” came crashing out triumphantly; with swelling waves of jubilant rejoicing

that were almost painful in their contrast to the plaintive music whose notes as yet had scarcely faded from our ears.

“Te Deum laudamus,” rose louder and louder still, “Te Dominum confitemur,” and as the holy chaunt went on, filling the sanctuary with its glorious strains, and floating up to heaven, as it seemed to me in my simplicity, laden with the fragrant incense of our dear one’s vows and prayers, she was conducted in procession round the choir. Humbly she knelt for a moment at the feet of each of the sisterhood, beginning with the prioress, and then rising gave and received the kiss of peace. And, thus, amid the solemn sounds of prayer and praise—amid the glorious strains of the Te Deum which seemed to grow more jubilant and full of gladness as the grand old hymn went on—the procession was formed once more, and, taking her place in it, Sister Mary Benedicta, our own dear child, the child of so many hopes, of so many aspirations, and of so many prayers, passed away from our longing and our tear-dimmed eyes into the blessed peace, the holy calm, the stainless innocence of her convent home.

O happy spouse of Christ! Blessed in thy vocation, blessed in thy faithful correspondence to it, may the never-failing benediction of Him who has espoused thee for evermore to Himself go with thee into thy happy home. Whilst the roar of the striving world is sounding discordantly in our

ears, and dragging down perforce to things of earth the thoughts that would fain go up to God, no harsher sound shall ever fall upon thy ears than the silvery tones of the *Matin* or the *Vesper* bell. Whilst we must be content to think ourselves almost too blest if now and then we can snatch an hour or two to give to God, thy life shall be spent in never-ceasing acts of love and prayer—in holy vigil and in penitential fast—in sacred chaunt and in solemn song rising up to God's eternal throne. And, most blessed occupation of thy life, it shall be thy happy lot to take thy share in that most sacred work of love, in that most priceless act of prayer—in that most precious devotion which must draw down God's blessing on this poor erring wandering land of ours—this England of so many hopes and prayers—the Perpetual Adoration of the Word made Flesh in the Adorable Sacrament of His Love. Yes, dear England of so many blighted hopes, so many broken promises, so many aspirations unfulfilled, never shall we despair of the happy future yet to come, whilst, night and day, in never-failing watch, in never-ceasing adoration, in never-tiring love and prayer, the stainless spouses of the Word made Flesh kneel before the Tabernacle where He dwells, and raise their innocent voices in supplication to the throne of grace.

CHAPTER V.

L'ENVOI.

YEAR after year glides rapidly away, and, gliding thus away, tempers with its chastening hand the memory of those sorrows which fall, more or less heavily, across the path of each man's life. And thus it is, that, despite the sorrows which, heavily and bitterly enough, fell to my own share during certain portions of my life, I sit down at the window of my own bright room at Ravenshale, to pen the last few words of this simple tale, a very happy and a very grateful man.

It is ten years since Sir Marmaduke took me in his arms and told me that henceforth his home was mine, that henceforth he and I could never part again. And, in truth, so it has been. Now and again I make a pretence of leaving them, and actually go so far as to take my departure; for, you know, I do not like to seem to intrude upon them, as I sometimes fancy that I must be doing. But, I have only been away a few days, when I am certain to receive a letter from my dear boy telling me that his children are crying for me; that his wife has no one to look after the village schools, and to execute her commissions amongst

her pensioners; in a word, that everything is going wrong at Ravenshale, and that I must come home at once. If I delay to do so, and make pretence of putting off my return, after one or two letters more my boy comes for me himself, and carries me back, a willing captive, home. As we drive up to the stately Hall there is a great commotion at the door. His wife is there to bid me welcome, and chide me for staying so long away. There are children clinging round my knees and holding up their innocent faces for me to kiss. There is one little fellow—another “Arty,” only this one is sturdy and strong—who must, perforce, be taken up and carried in my arms as I am led off in triumph to my own bright rooms. Wherever I go I never see so fair a sight as that which greets my eyes as I walk over to the windows of the rooms which have been set aside for me. I never see, in any other rooms but these, so many pretty things to please an old man’s eyes; so many skilful appliances to woo an old man’s weary limbs to rest. And, hence, as my boy draws nearer to my side, and whispers as he puts his hand upon my arm, “now, guardian, you must not treat us thus again, or else we shall begin to think you do not care for us,” is it any wonder that my eyes grow dim; or that I am fain to turn my head away, and thank my God, in the silent language of the heart, that He has given me such ample cause to think myself a very happy and a very grateful man?

If you enter those rooms at the top of the

house—those rooms with the bars in front of the windows, whence children's voices are to be heard for ever issuing during the day, you will find there a lady who, like myself, is passing on to the autumn of her days; a lady who was noble and beautiful in her youth, and who is no less noble and beautiful now in the honest comeliness of her growing years. She is not often to be seen amongst the guests who throng the hospitable mansion of her son; but, with the silvery locks, which nature herself has covered with her snows, drawn in two plain bands across the matronly brow, she is a pleasant sight to look upon as she calls the little children to kneel around her feet, and takes the little hands and folds them in her own, and teaches the young lips which as yet can scarcely form the words, to say "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." I know something of Sir Marmaduke's admiring love of the noble woman to whom it was given to be his mother, and I know that it is measureless. Her happiness, like mine, is chastened by the sorrows and the holy memories of the past; and, yet, with such a son to tend with never-failing care the honoured closing of her honoured life; with the fresh young love of children's hearts to scatter on her path to the grave a thousand flowers of never-dying sweetness; it would be strange indeed if she were not a proud and happy woman.

Sometimes, not often, a passing cloud drifts

across the calm horizon of my happy days. When this is so, I call the little Arty to my side and, taking his hand in mine, we walk across the village to the dear old home. It is mine no longer now, and as we draw near you may see that each of the quaint old gables is surmounted by a cross. We turn aside a little to where Our Lady stands in pure white marble, that we may lay our tribute of fair fresh flowers before her sacred feet, and then we pass on to the porch where, with his finger upon his lips, we find our dear St. Benedict. My little all was spent upon the old home to make it a fitting dwelling for those whom I aspired to lead to its peaceful shades. It took some time, and it needed some diplomacy, before I could effect my purpose; but no one can ever tell what a happy man I was when, with ringing of the convent bell, with banner and with crucifix, we all went forth to meet the holy sisterhood who, headed by our dear Mother Mary Benedicta, came to make their home in Farleye Hall. And, thus, when I am dead and gone, and it is a happy thought to me, the holy hand will still rest on in Farleye Hall, and ceaseless prayer from consecrated lips, and never failing adoration of the Word made Flesh, will draw a blessing down on all the country round. It is this happy thought which drives my darkest gloom away, and fills the heart that sometimes, spite of all, grows sad and lonely, with overflowing consolation, love, and joy.

When the little child has gone inside to say

his prayers, or, perhaps, to be taught his catechism by the holy nuns, I make my way to the pretty grave where the other little child was laid to his peaceful rest. There you are sure to find the first fair snowdrop of the early Spring, and the last of the Autumn flowers. As golden memories of my child come floating round me yet once more, a happy calm steals o'er my troubled soul and all is peace again. And, then, with grateful heart, I kneel and pray that when the appointed time has come I may go in joy to join the dear ones who have gone before. I pray that men may have no worse to say of me than that, to the best of my poor strength, I ever strove to be a simple truthful honest man—that, striving to love my God and the Holy Catholic Faith above all things, I ever strove to love my neighbour as myself, and to accomplish with a cheerful heart the little good that it lay in my hand to do. When, under the shadows of the dear old home, I am resting with my little child, I humbly hope that those who come to pray eternal peace upon me as I sleep, may be able to add that, through all the changes and the trials of this fleeting life, I was—as, in very truth, it became the last of the brave old stock to be—a FARLEYE OF FARLEYE, FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

THE END.

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